

The developing relationship between youth offending teams and children's trusts

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1 Background

The election of the Labour Government in 1997 marked the beginning of considerable change in the way both children's and youth justice services are delivered. Previously, youth justice had been a function of local authority social services departments, although the 1990s had seen the emergence of specialist teams working with young people who offend. The effectiveness of these arrangements was challenged by the publication of the White Paper *No More Excuses* (Home Office, 1997), which recommended a robust and separate youth justice system, focused on preventing offending rather than meeting welfare needs. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 was the legislative framework for the changes, establishing the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) under the direction of the Home Office. There has also been a drive to reform other children's services, which were perceived as fragmented and centred on the interests of agencies rather than the needs of the children and families they were serving. This culminated in the Every Child Matters programme (HM Government, 2004), which required services to work together in order to deliver five key outcomes for children:

- being healthy
- staying safe
- enjoying and achieving
- making a positive contribution
- achieving economic well-being.

The mechanism for this reconfiguration of services was to be the Children's Trusts. The Children Act 2004 subsequently directed that each local authority must set up a Children's Services Authority (CSA), responsible for existing social care and education functions, and for developing other ways of integrating services through 'children's trust arrangements', although the detail of these arrangements was left to local discretion. The position of youth offending teams (YOTs) within these arrangements is the subject of this study.

The need for services to be aligned is clear; children who commit offences are usually children with a range of needs, such as mental health problems or exclusion from school, and such issues will have contributed to their offending behaviour. Because of these needs, they are also likely to be known to other agencies. For example, about 20% of juveniles in custody are looked-after children or care-leavers, and many more have had previous local authority intervention, either from social services as children in need or from schools as children with special educational needs (SEN). There is thus a large area of overlap between youth justice and other children's services.

Youth offending teams

YOTs were introduced in April 2000 to co-ordinate provision at a local level in order to deliver the principal aim of the youth justice system, as set out in section 37 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998; namely to prevent offending by children and young people aged from 10 to 17 years. The YJB oversees the work of the YOTs; it sets standards, determines the

systems that they will use and monitors their performance, but does not directly manage them. Each YOT has a local management board, responsible to the Council's Chief Executive, and Her Majesty's Inspector of Probation (HMIP) inspects the work of the YOTs.

A YOT comprises a multi-disciplinary team of professionals. Statutory involvement is required from local authority social services and education departments; the police, probation service and health authorities, and other agencies, such as housing, youth and community departments. Those working on drug and alcohol abuse are also encouraged to contribute. A YOT manager, who is responsible for co-ordinating the work of the local youth justice services, leads each team.

The role of the YOT includes:

- carrying out assessments of all young people coming into contact with the youth justice system in order to identify factors contributing to their offending behaviour, current needs and future risks
- providing preventative programmes for those identified as being at risk of offending, and targeted interventions for those on Final Warnings
- providing supervising officers for young people subject to community or custodial sentences, and developing appropriate plans
- providing court-based services.

Children's trusts

The underpinning principle of the Every Child Matters programme is for all services working with children in a local area to work together to develop an integrated approach to delivering positive outcomes for children through the children's trust arrangements. This is illustrated in Figure 1 (HM Government, 2004).

Figure 1: Model of integrated children's services



In 2003, local authorities were invited by the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (now Department for Children, Schools and Families) and the Department of Health to bid for funding to pilot children's trusts, and 35 pathfinders were established as a result. These pathfinders did not have to address the needs of all children in a given area, but could

have a more specific focus, such as disabled children or a particular age group. Early findings from the national evaluation of this initiative (DfES, 2003) highlighted a number of challenges, including problems in establishing governance arrangements, the complexity presented by different geographical boundaries and the difficulty of reconciling multiple targets. However, a number of enabling factors were also identified, including a commitment to integration at all levels and joint training.

Youth offending teams and children's trusts

YOTs are clearly a crucial component if services for children are to be integrated. However, the original remit for the establishment of pilot or pathfinder children's trusts did not include them. In spite of this, the passage of the Children Act 2004 made it clear that an increasing involvement of YOTs with children's services was expected. Section 10 of the Act places a reciprocal 'duty to co-operate' on local authority children's services and a number of named partner agencies, including YOTs.

The involvement of YOTs in children's trusts, or children's services in general, should provide an opportunity to improve outcomes for children and young people, both those at risk of poor outcomes because of their own offending and their potential victims. In theory, involvement with children's trust arrangements (and all that this entails for inter-agency governance and the integration of strategy, processes and frontline delivery) should enable YOTs to more readily access mainstream social care, education and health services for young people who offend. In turn, other children's services should be enabled to involve YOTs in promoting the safety and welfare of the children with whom they are working in accordance with their own duty under section 10.

A series of draft guidance documents (DfES, 2003) issued by the DfES attempted to explain further how YOTs were meant to 'plug into' the new local children's trust models, local authority Children and Young People's Plans, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), safeguarding duty, and joint inspection frameworks. However, the detail was to be decided at a local level and it was not clear how strategic level joint commissioning and planning of children's services would translate into the provision of co-operative or even integrated children's services on the frontline.

In 2004, the Audit Commission found that there had been considerable improvements in the youth justice system since 1998, but made a number of further recommendations (Audit Commission, 2004). Two of these recommendations are particularly pertinent to the involvement of YOTs with children's services. It was recommended that YOTs:

- **meet the wider needs of offenders:** including keeping children in education, training and employment and involving schools in preventing offending; convincing health and mental health services of their crucial role and providing more appropriate accommodation
- **prevent children offending in the first place:** this can be achieved through targeted early intervention programmes by YOTs and also by mainstream agencies, such as schools and health services which should take full responsibility for preventing offending by young people.

In relation to the governance of YOTs, the Audit Commission recommended that they should not be merged into a single crime reduction service (with Drug Action Teams [DATs] and

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships [CDRPs]), nor should they become part of the management of children's services.

Building on their original 1998 guidance, in 2004 the YJB published *Sustaining the Success*, which reflects changes in the environment within which the YOTs work, both in terms of criminal justice partners and children's services. The guidance acknowledges the conclusions of the 2004 Audit Commission report and recognises the unique position of the YOTs in that they are both an integral part of the criminal justice system and a key partner in children's services. The YJB is not prescriptive about the positioning of YOTs in relation to children's services, stating that they are 'not envisaged as belonging exclusively to any one department'. Indeed it states that it is not appropriate to have a national single position on the relationship of YOTs with the children's trusts. The YJB views the emergence of children's trusts as providing an opportunity to revisit governance arrangements in order to clarify relationships with partners:

It is imperative, as recommended by the Audit Commission's 2004 report into youth justice that the YOT sits equally between the Criminal Justice System and other children and young people's services. YOTs must not be so embedded within the child welfare system that the confidence, support and contribution of criminal justice agencies and the public is lost. Equally, YOTs must not be dominated by criminal justice services so that they are too distanced from other children's services and cannot access the services needed to address the risk factors faced by young offenders.

(YJB, 2004:6)

The YJB does, however, provide some detail about how governance arrangements should ensure links between the YOT and both children's services and the local CDRP. For example, YOTs located within a children's trust should:

- maintain a dedicated management board
- have a protocol to ensure the trust prioritises young people who offend
- ensure links to the YJB and local CDRP.

When YOTs are located outside the children's trust, there should be a protocol with the trust to ensure that young people who offend receive services and that cases are dealt with by working with children's services.

Rationale for the research

Sustaining the Success had already, therefore, identified and anticipated key issues relevant to YOTs in developing successful partnerships and inter-agency working. Meanwhile, early findings from the National Evaluation of Children's Trusts (DfES, 2007) highlighted particular challenges in establishing children's trusts, many of which are relevant to the involvement of YOTs. However the peripheral role of YOTs in the initial phase of development meant that little consideration was given in the evaluation to their specific challenges.

At the time of commissioning this research⁸, it was felt that these challenges could fall in the following areas, all of which were worthy of further exploration:

- **Governance**

Sustaining the Success suggested that governance arrangements for YOTs should be determined at a local level, but that YOTs must sit between the criminal justice system and other children's services in order not to be submerged by either. Historically, local management arrangements for YOTs have not been consistently developed, with subsequent difficulties in steering the work across partner agencies. Additionally, arrangements for anti-social behaviour strategies and services lay with the CDRPs, which worked outside local authority children's services and the emerging children's trusts. These complexities were reflected in the split in governance at a national level, whereby responsibility for youth justice rested with the Home Office and the YJB while an increasing integration of children's services was taking place within the DfES.

- **Geographical boundaries**

Although there is a YOT in every local authority, some YOTs are also clustered within criminal justice areas. This could be expected to pose challenges in establishing clear lines of communication and accountability, and in delivering services across boundaries.

- **Planning and partnership working**

Early findings from the national evaluation of Children's Trusts (DfES, 2007) highlighted the number of plans, which impacted on the development of an integrated service for children. The involvement of YOTs would bring a number of other plans (e.g. youth justice plans) and partnership arrangements (e.g. CDRPs) into the equation, with no clear indication of how these plans and strategies would be aligned with the overarching Children and Young People's Plan. Additional challenges related to the extent to which YOTs and other children's services would be able to work together on the CAF, and information sharing database or index.

- **Client group**

The National Evaluation of Children's Trusts team highlighted the differences in the defined users for the pathfinder children's trusts. Some were developing universal arrangements for all children, while others were aimed at specific groups, such as disabled children. By definition, YOTs do not work with all children but with those either deemed to be at risk of offending (preventative work) or who have offended (targeted work). These different areas of 'overlap' could be expected to impact on the way that relationships developed in different areas.

- **Divergent policy aims**

The role of YOTs is to reduce offending and their assessment system (*Asset*) is designed to identify the risk factors in offending. This is different from the role of other children's services, where promoting and meeting welfare needs is a more central tenet.

⁸ The research reported here was commissioned in order to explore these issues. The research was undertaken from June 2005 to June 2007.

Update: recent policy developments

Since the research was commissioned, the policy in relation to children's services and youth justice has continued to evolve. The requirement that children's services authorities should be established has meant that local authorities have had to restructure and appoint a single Director of Children's Services (DCS) responsible for social care, education and other council services for children. The disruption that this has caused has inevitably been a distraction for senior managers. In addition, the reference to 'children's trust arrangements' rather than Children's Trusts per se has, perhaps, weakened the focus on this initiative. The boundaries between Children's Trusts, less formal children's trust arrangements and other forms of partnerships are not always easy to distinguish in practice. The final evaluation report states that:

The complexity of local changes made it difficult to distinguish the influence of pathfinders from other developments in the leadership and management of children's services.

(DfES, 2007:2)

This complexity led to a shift in the remit of the research. The purpose of the research was primarily to inform the development of practice in relation to joint working, and it was decided therefore to consider the emerging involvement of YOTs with children's services in the broader sense, rather than focusing only on clearly delineated Children's Trusts.

A change in policy direction as emerged, with responsibility for the YJB shifting from the Home Office to a shared responsibility between the new departments of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). A new Joint Youth Justice Unit will steer the work. It is too soon to know how this will work in practice, but it marks a philosophical shift towards acknowledging that young people who offend cannot be considered in isolation from other children.

Overview of this report

The primary purpose of this report is to provide practical pointers for those working in, or with, YOTs in order to support them in developing successful relationships with partners in children's services at both a strategic and operational level. Thus managers, commissioners and practitioners from a range of agencies may all have an interest in the findings.

This was an exploratory research study, not an evaluation. Therefore we describe and analyse, but we do not make judgements about what has 'worked'. In this concise report we have attempted to present and distil the learning from the experiences of six very different case study sites, and have reframed these findings in the form of questions that YOTs and their partners can ask (and answer) themselves.

While we collected a vast amount of detailed information from the six sites, we have attempted to refine this into more general and generic messages that have a wider application. This is particularly important given the complexity and range of structures and relationships we found in just six areas; no two sites are alike, and local solutions need to be found, albeit based on some generally applicable principles.

2 The research study

The purpose of the research was to provide evidence that would enhance understanding of the relationship between YOTs and children's trusts, thus enabling closer involvement and more effective joint working, and ultimately resulting in improved outcomes for children and young people.

Stated aims of the research

- To develop an understanding of the implications for YOTs, children's trusts and services users of the closer involvement of YOTs with children's trusts, including issues of governance, strategic planning, service delivery and outcomes for children.
- To identify the benefits and challenges of closer involvement of YOTs with children's trusts and the lessons that can be drawn from this.
- To enhance knowledge of what helps and hinders the integration of services and partnership working more generally.
- To draw out the policy and practice implications of the research findings for all agencies working with children.

Methods

A range of methods were used over the two-year research period in order to explore the complex issues involved. These are summarised below.

Stage 1 (June 2005–March 2006)

The initial stage of the research was designed to draw together evidence from a number of sources: data and early findings from the national evaluation of the 35 pathfinder Children's Trusts, a national survey of YOT managers, and more detailed evidence from the two local authorities acting as demonstration sites in respect of YOTs and children's trusts.

While findings from the national evaluation of Children's Trusts were examined, it was decided not to use the original data in this study as originally planned as it turned out to include very little evidence in relation to YOTs. Furthermore, data collected by the national evaluation a year previously (2004) would not form a valid point of comparison in such a rapidly changing environment.

Stakeholder interviews (two demonstration sites)

Data collection visits were made to the two demonstration sites in autumn 2005. Five detailed interviews were conducted with senior stakeholders in each site. Interviewees were selected to represent the children's trust arrangements, children's services authority (where relevant), CDRP and YOT perspectives. The sample included both officers and members. Key documents were also gathered from each site.

Survey of YOT managers (national)

The aim of the survey was to provide a national overview of developing relationships between YOTs and children's trust arrangements. The short questionnaire gathered information about current and planned structural arrangements and sought the views of YOT managers on the likely implications of the changes. Questionnaires were emailed to all 138 YOT managers in November 2005. Following an initially poor response (32 questionnaires), a second mailout in March 2006 attracted a further 17 questionnaires, giving an overall response rate of 36%.

Stage 2 (April 2006–March 2007)

The second stage of the research focused on six case study sites. In addition to the two demonstration sites included in Stage 1, four additional local authorities were selected to provide a wide range of different settings and structural arrangements. See Appendix A for detailed information relating to each site.

Table 1: Local authority setting of case study YOTs

Area	Local authority
A*	Metropolitan borough
B*	County council, covering six district councils
C	Unitary authority
D	Unitary authority
E	County council, covering 12 district councils
F	Cross-authority YOT covering one county council and three unitary authorities

* *Demonstration sites for Stage 1 of the research*

In addition to gathering relevant documentation from each area, the views of a range of stakeholders were sought. Data collection methods and samples are outlined briefly below.

Senior stakeholder interviews

Over the summer of 2006, 40 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with senior managers across all six case study sites. In all areas the YOT manager and senior children's services representatives were interviewed. The remainder of the sample varied between sites according to local context, incorporating partners in other services for children and young people and community safety. See Table 2 below for the full sample.

Table 2: Stage 2 interviewee agencies and numbers

Agency	No
YOT (manager)	6
Children's services (director)	6
Children's services (other representatives)	6
Children's Trust representative (if not DCS)	3*
Connexions	6
Youth service	1
Child health (PCT/care trust/SHA)	3*

CAMHS	1
Pupil Referral Unit	1
Probation	1
Police	5
Community Safety (Council)	1
Adult services (Council)	1
Total interviews	40

* One CT manager also a PCT representative

The interviews explored:

- governance and management of the YOT
- YOT involvement in local strategic partnerships
- planning and commissioning arrangements
- joint processes such as assessment and training and examples of joint working.

Additional update interviews were undertaken in February 2007 with YOT managers to discuss any key developments since the summer. While these later interviews were not in the original project proposal, given the rapid pace of change at local level, they were felt to be necessary in order to bring the findings up to date.

Surveys of practitioners (YOTs and partner services)

In February 2007 surveys were conducted to gather the views of practitioners in YOTs and partner agencies in the six case study areas. Operational managers and frontline workers were targeted in a two-stage sampling process. Senior stakeholders provided contact details of operational managers in YOTs and other relevant local partner agencies. These operational managers were sent questionnaires and additionally asked to identify and provide contact details for up to five frontline practitioners from their services; these frontline staff were then surveyed.

The questionnaires aimed to find out whether any changes to relationships and structures between the YOT and its partners had filtered down to the operational level, affecting, for example, working practices or outcomes for young people. The questionnaire also sought to discover how effectively any changes had been communicated and sought respondents' views about the future of their services.

As Table 3 below summarises, 69 questionnaires were received in total, 25 from YOTs and 44 from partner agencies. Responses were received from across all six demonstration sites. Respondents worked in a variety of partner agencies from the community safety perspective (police, council community safety and anti-social behaviour teams) and from agencies that provide services for children and young people (e.g. social care teams, education welfare teams, schools, Connexions, youth services, PCTs, substance misuse services).

Table 3: Response to practitioner survey

	Operational managers			Frontline workers			Total
	YOT	Partners	Total	YOT	Partners	Total	
Number sent	17	62	79	58	87	145	224
Number received	7	30	37	18	14	32	69
Response rate	41%	48%	47%	31%	16%	22%	31%

Because of the sampling method employed and the rather patchy response, the sample cannot be claimed to be representative of all workers within YOTs or their partner organisations. Rather, the survey findings provide an indicative picture of practitioner views.

Focus groups with parents and young people

In order to gather the views of service users, focus groups were carried out with young people and parents between October 2006 and January 2007. The groups aimed to capture participants' views about integrated working in general, and their perceptions of service provision for young people who offend and vulnerable young people at risk of offending.

A focus group with young people was conducted in each case study area (32 young people in total) and one with parents in five of the six areas (a total of 26 parents). All young people were involved in either preventative activities or on Community Orders, some had experience of custody. Their ages ranged from nine to 18 years. YOT staff recruited parents. Some were involved in parenting groups, while others had children involved with the YOT. Further detail about the focus groups can be found in Appendix B.

Stage 3 (April 07–June 07)

This final stage of the research involved translating the findings into policy and practice messages. All data was analysed during this period. Preliminary findings were initially validated through a process of presentation and discussion at a closed interactive seminar for case study site personnel in May 2007. YOT managers attended from all six sites, as well as representatives from children's services from three areas. Discussions at this seminar and a subsequent presentation to a YOTs and Children's Trust Network meeting in May 2007, have informed the format in which findings have been presented in this report.

3 Research findings

Here we present the summarised findings from the research, drawing upon and integrating findings from both stages, including the national survey of YOT managers, interviews with senior stakeholders from YOT and partner agencies in the six case study sites, a survey of service managers and practitioners and focus groups with parents and young people from each of the YOTs.

Please see the Appendices for more detail about the case study sites, and also a full analysis of the focus groups with young people and parents.

National and local context

This section presents in summarised form the views of senior stakeholders interviewed in the six case study sites on various contextual factors, which they perceived to be relevant to the developing relationship between YOTs and children's services. In each site YOT managers and representatives from community safety, children's services authorities and other children and young people's agencies were interviewed. It is important to be aware of the complexity, variety and constantly-changing nature of the local and national context, before moving on to consider how specific structures and services are developing in the six case study sites.

Central government policy

Local stakeholders recognised that government policy for children's services and youth justice was rapidly evolving during the period of fieldwork. It was felt that having to respond to successive new guidance and policies from different arms of government created the risk of local authorities losing focus due to being in a state of 'continuous change', becoming 'snowed under' or suffering from confusion arising from 'guidance on top of guidance'.

Youth Justice Board

As a distinct national body overseeing the work of YOTs, the YJB was felt to play an important and positive role in enabling and supporting YOTs to develop and maintain their distinct identity in local relationships and structures:

The great advantage is that ... that YOT has this kind of national infrastructure that helps hold it to task and build this expertise in the input of things like the Youth Justice Board, which is a good counter balance to any local focus on being warm and cuddly and caring about children's needs rather than their behaviours. So it's a good balance, really, and YOTs are very privileged at one level because they do have [the YJB's] infrastructure, its guidance, its frameworks, its performance management frameworks, its access to expertise, its very clear mission statement and sense of purpose and the way that it holds YOTs to account. Many other services would benefit from having that same national agency with all those kind of responsibilities. So we must never forget the influence that that has on the local scene.

(Children's services representative)

Case study site personnel had mixed views about the non-prescriptive approach to the location of YOTs in relation to children's services. Some praised the flexibility that this has accorded, enabling local determination of models and relationships. However, others would have preferred clearer direction. This is also the case in relation to the emerging service structures for young people, as described in the Green Paper *Youth Matters*.

A concern expressed by many at the time of the interviews was that of insecure future funding; YJB funding for YOTs was uncertain, and prevention-funding streams were also unconfirmed beyond 2008 (although it has subsequently been announced that the Children's Fund is being extended beyond this date). It was suggested that a YOT with low levels of local funding could find it difficult to maintain core activities without sufficient levels of funding from the YJB. Funding issues are closely related to issues of corporate ownership from local partners. A concern was raised that YOTs situated outside children's services could be at risk of losing their prevention funding if this was to be determined by the DfES (now DCSF) in the future.

Conflicting policy aims

At the time of the interviews, there was a perception that youth justice was separate or 'cut off' from other policies for children and young people. Local stakeholders perceived that the YJB, Home Office, DfES and Department of Health did not work closely enough together.

The Every Child Matters essentially could have had a subtext that said every child matters so long they don't offend, in which case if they do offend they'll have a separate policy arrangement. And we [local authority] don't want to promote that error in policy.

(Children's services representative)

It was reported that the respect and anti-social behaviour policies were at times in conflict with the spirit of *Youth Matters* and *Every Child Matters*. Local stakeholders felt that many of the challenges and conflicts they faced at local level could be traced back to this fundamental central tension about how young people who offend should be viewed and dealt with.

I think there is a real tension between, and I know it's at government level as well, between a kind of national approach that wants to punish young people for doing something that they shouldn't have done - a big public outcry which wants to see young people punished for the things that they've done, even if sometimes they haven't done them - and the Every Child Matters agenda which is a much more empowering one, and I think that does need to be resolved. I'm not sure it ever will be while the Home Office and DfES aren't working as closely together as they need on this.

(Children's services representative)

In central government, it is still perceived as being young people who offend are treated as offenders first and young people second, as opposed to the other way round, which is, I think, some people would feel would be a more positive message if YOTs had been drawn up through the DfES line rather than the Home Office line.

(Connexions representative)

It will be interesting to see if the change in governance of youth justice at government level, and the rebranding of the 'Respect' agenda will make a difference to this perception over time.

The education system could also present its own challenges at a local level with its own policy priorities, sometimes at odds with the needs of young people who offend. Stakeholders highlighted difficulties in working with schools, which they perceived to be operating as autonomous organisations 'outside Every Child Matters'. Many also felt that education provision for under-16s was not always appropriate for vulnerable young people such as those who offend, as it then led to exclusions or non-attendance. Engaging young people who offend in post-16 education and training was also reported to be problematic. Interestingly, the focus groups with both young people and parents supported the perception that schools were insufficiently concerned with helping young people, being 'only there to teach'.

Some tensions were also noted in relation to social care services, as young people who offend were often reported as not reaching their threshold. The very model of a distinct YOT was felt by some to have reduced ownership amongst social services of young people once they entered the youth justice system. One interviewee explained that links at strategic level could actually sometimes have a negative impact on joint working at operational level:

One of the unforeseen consequences to establishing the YOT model in the late 1990s was that agencies such as the then Children's Social Services made their contribution into the coffers of the YOTs, attended the committees but essentially thought, 'That's our commitment to young offenders dealt with, that's now dealt with within the YOT', and I don't think that we've ever really succeeded on the secondary element, within the partnerships for youth justice services, about ensuring that related services are supporting each other around the prevention of offending.

(Children's services representative)

Inspection and performance management arrangements

There are currently separate inspection and performance management systems for YOTs and children's services, albeit with some links across in the Annual Performance Assessment (APA), Joint Areas Review (JAR) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) processes. The relationship between performance and inspection of their respective services was thought to be important by demonstration site personnel but opinions were mixed, with some children's services stakeholders questioning the need for separate systems in the context of integration and other participants describing both opportunities and challenges.

For example, where processes were linked, this presented an opportunity for the YOT to contribute to the wider children's services agenda, to direct senior level attention on the YOT and to raise the profile and importance of YOTs within local authorities. One YOT manager described how the YOT's involvement in the APA process had helped reinforce the credibility of the YOT and strategic focus on the YOT within the council. However, another YOT manager suggested that increasing the YOT's links to APA could result in local authorities trying to increase their control over them. YOT interviewees also expressed a concern at the amount of time involved in meeting the requirements of these different systems with their various cycles of reporting and inspection.

It was also said that the YOT's separate inspection and performance management system helps to ensure that it remains focused on its core aims, and reinforces the distinct identity of the YOT. Some YOT managers felt that children's service partners would benefit from greater engagement with the YOT's performance management system, and that this would help partners to understand the drivers behind their work and to enable them to take greater ownership of the YOT performance targets. However, some children's services' representatives described the YOT systems as challenging to 'get to grips with'.

The local environment: changing structures

The period during which this research took place was one of considerable change and disruption in the six case study sites, including local elections, reorganisation of council structures, the development of children's services authorities and structural changes taking place within partner organisations, providing a constantly moving landscape. This section of the report describes the underlying issues in general terms, whereas the detail of how each site was affected by these changes will be presented in the subsection 'Location of YOTs within council structures'.

One particularly significant backdrop to the research was provided by the wholesale changes taking place within children's services in all case study sites, due to the requirement on local authorities to establish children's service authorities. While the pace and timing of such changes varied from authority to authority, all were affected to a greater or lesser degree.

The experience of some local areas during the research period was characterised by periods of uncertainty and transition, resulting from lengthy reviews of children's service structures and, in some cases, transitional arrangements with the children's service authority being managed by government administration. Even in sites where new arrangements had already been agreed, they were often still in relatively early stages of implementation. In one authority, where children's structures had been in place relatively early on, a review of young people's services took place during the period of research entailing further changes.

One YOT manager summarised this perception:

Everything is changing, and I think it's changing at such a pace, that the elements of stability that we've got in the YOT which are obvious, and that's core business, is the only thing really that feels kind of grounded really.

(YOT manager)

A children's services partner underlined the risks presented by the change process:

The issue always is, in that process of change, how do you keep all of your day-to-day functional services operating and not take your eye off the ball, because it's like you're having to do two things at once, isn't it? Because you're keeping the operational service going but you're reconfiguring some of its relationships or its structural set up, and for me the issue then always is the capacity and it's almost a more risky time going through the change.

(Children's services representative)

Structures for strategic children's trust arrangements in the case study sites were also changing over the course of this research study. In some areas the partnership boards were relatively new and not yet fully functioning. Elsewhere, early established boards were going

through further changes, for example changing focus from a Children's Trust board for vulnerable children, to a Children and Young People's Partnership Board for all children and young people.

Substantial council restructuring added an additional layer of change and instability in some case study sites during 2006 and 2007. These changes were reported to have created a strong sense of instability and a feeling of constant flux within the local authority generally, impacting particularly on those YOTs that were closely managed within council structures.

In addition to structural changes within local authorities, it was also noted that restructuring within the police, court services and health services (Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Strategic Health Authority (SHAs)) had a significant impact on YOTs, the effectiveness of their partnership working and management boards. Uncertainty around the future of Connexions was also an important issue for YOTs. Connexions is seen as a key partner due to the shared agenda around young people Not In Education, Employment And Training (NEET) and the shared age group of service users.

The local environment: size, location and boundaries

The case study sites encompass the full range of local government arrangements, with the YOTs based in two-tier, unitary and metropolitan local authorities and including one of the seven cross-authority YOTs in England and Wales. These different local government geographies inevitably present specific issues for the development of the YOTs' relationships with their partners.

In areas where the YOT area is coterminous with the council boundary, stakeholders have highlighted logistical and resource challenges in engaging with the full range of relevant partners. This is attributed to the sheer numbers of partner agencies working within such a large geographical area – not only district councils, but also other local agencies whose boundaries may be different (such as PCTs and police constabularies). One of the case study sites covers a very large geographical area which is largely rural, but with a concentration of population in one area. This local geography hindered the practical development of particular joint working arrangements such as co-location. Challenges were also presented by the YOT having a single base and working out from there.

The converse was more likely to be the case in metropolitan areas, where services may straddle several YOT boundaries. One YOT located in a metropolitan authority covers a relatively small geographical area, and for this reason a number of YOT activities are delivered jointly with neighbouring boroughs, requiring the YOT to have a more outward-looking focus to its partnership working. This reflects the artificiality of local government boundaries in the lives of young people who offend in large urban areas. Boundaries between neighbouring metropolitan boroughs, and also between adjacent urban areas covered in the cross-authority YOT, inevitably do not correspond exactly with the movement patterns of young people who are offending. Thus the areas in which young people live, work, go to school, access other services, and indeed offend, may not be neatly contained within single local authorities.

Coterminous boundaries are seen to be more advantageous in unitary authority settings as there are fewer partner organisations to be engaged, and key personnel are likely to be already well acquainted. It was also suggested that joint working could be achieved more rapidly within a smaller authority:

[Unitary authority] is such a small geographical area, that in truth these things have been in place for a long time; it's different to working in a big shire authority or working in a large metropolitan city... People know each other here, they're used to working with each other and it's fundamentally different in terms of those relationships... We've got one PCT, we're a police division, you've got co-terminosity in terms of social care and education, it's a geographically dense area, six miles from top to bottom and about two miles across. Those things help. Clearly if people loathed each other and we refused to work together then those advantages would be outweighed but the reality is, it is fundamentally different delivering that, the government's agenda in [unitary authority] than it is in [neighbouring county authority].

(Children's services representative)

While YOTs in unitary authorities appear to have the benefit of fewer partner organisations, a local stakeholder suggested that nevertheless there could be problems in building and maintaining partnerships due to there being fewer management personnel in smaller organisations:

If you looked at the development of Children's Trusts in the Shire counties, it's complexity that's the problem when you've got numbers of district councils to bring in. In small unitaries it's capacity. When you're taken off on one thing, you're not available for another.

(Children's services representative)

The salary level and associated seniority of the YOT manager also varies according to the size of the YOT; those covering large areas being more likely to require and justify the cost of a senior YOT manager than a smaller local authority. While the seniority of YOT managers per se did not appear to be seen as a factor in the effectiveness of YOT partnership arrangements, it nevertheless affects the level at which it is appropriate for the YOT manager to engage in strategic relationships.

Specific local issues

Apart from the general issues relevant to all case study sites discussed above, local stakeholders referred to a number of locally relevant factors which they believed to be of potential significance to the developing relationship between YOTs and children's services.

Political administration of council

The political administration of councils in the case study sites varied, and in several cases changed during the course of the research, affecting the ways in which young people who offend were viewed. For example, in one authority stakeholders expressed concern about the language used by the lead member for children's services in relation to young people who offend. While potential 'tough on crime' approaches were concerning on one level, some stakeholders viewed this as an opportunity for the YOT to be seen as an important player. Elsewhere, the political philosophy of the council was highlighted as being clearly advantageous to the YOT:

There's a very clear and strong policy commitment within the council at a political level about making it a safer community, but not in a way which is a kind of a, in any sense a reactionary hang 'em and flog 'em approach. There is a high degree of

concern about circumstances where young people are involved in offending, but it is a balanced concern which is about addressing the needs of the young people as well as addressing the needs of the communities and so we've got, we're working within what I think is a pretty constructive policy framework.

(Connexions representative)

Local authority finances

Three of the case study sites were in authorities in which financial efficiencies were being implemented. It was felt that this could have a significant impact on developing YOT relationships, including generating a widespread sense of instability, restructuring resulting in leaner management structures, and creating anxiety over future YOT contributions and the spending of YOT resources. The location of the YOT within council structures was also felt to be significant in this context; while one 'free-standing' YOT felt protected from potential 'asset-stripping' when the council went into administration, another faced the prospect of a YOT underspend being allocated to Adult and Community Services.

Children's services performance

In two local authorities included in the case study sites, there had been periods when the government replaced senior management in children's services departments with interim management by external partners due to poor JAR performance. Clearly, such sudden changes to key personnel, together with an urgent focus on improving performance in children's services, can potentially disrupt developing relationships with the YOT.

History of partnership working

The history of local partnership working between the YOT and partners in children's services prior to Every Child Matters was identified by some stakeholders as an important consideration when looking at the current level of involvement. For example, in one case study site, YOT personnel reported a history of difficulties with a reportedly defensive and insular children's service, which had hindered the development of relationships, while another was able to capitalise on a history of close partnership.

Local service branding and identity

It was suggested that a challenge to developing relationships between YOTs and children's partners could arise from the creation of local identities or branding for services. For example, in one area an integrated youth service framework was being developed, and if defined as an integrated model with its own identity, it could potentially be seen as inappropriate for the YOT to maintain its distinct identity within the framework.

Location of YOTs within council structures

Having set out in the previous section the broad national and local context in which the YOTs were operating during the research period, in this section we summarise how the YOTs in each of the case study sites are linked to children's service structures – both children's trust arrangements and children's service authorities. The location of YOTs within council structures varied at the outset, and in virtually all cases was subject to change during the research period. The following is a description of local structures, governance and management arrangements, and the ways in which these have changed (and are expected to change in the near future) in the six sites.

YOT management arrangements

The first stage of this research was based on a national survey of YOT managers (in late 2005 to early 2006) and interviews with key stakeholders in the two early demonstration sites, which sought to find out what children’s trust arrangements were in place locally, and where the YOT stood in relation to them. This led to the development of a simple typology of YOT models. YOTs who responded to the survey (49 of 138) fitted into the following broad categories:

- a children’s services model (either children’s trust, children’s services authority or children’s division within a social services department)
- a community safety model
- ‘other’, including those that described their organisations as ‘freestanding’.

As anticipated, the local children’s trust arrangements described by YOTs were at varying levels of development, with 19 stating that they were in place within their council at the time of the survey. Over half of the respondents described themselves as being within a children’s service model. The table below summarises the different arrangements within the broad typology. Further detail about early arrangements can be found in the interim report to the YJB (YJB, 2006).

Table 4: Initial typology of the location of YOTs in council structures

Location of YOTs in council structures		
Children’s services model	Community safety model	Other
Children’s trust	Within community safety department	YOT perceives itself as ‘freestanding’, ‘standalone’ or ‘separate’ from other departments
Children’s services authority (including departments with different names such as ‘Children and Families’)	Within same department as community safety	Part of a department that includes both community safety and children’s services
Social services department with children and families still located within it (NB: no longer relevant as all children’s services authorities should now be established)		Chief executive’s department (in areas where this does not include community safety)

Changes to YOT location

The six case study sites studied in the second phase of research included the different broad models outlined in this initial typology. While subsequently tracking developments in these six sites, it became necessary to revise the typology to take account of new arrangements planned in two areas. This emergent model applies to situations in which the YOT is located with services for adolescents or young people (principally Connexions and youth services) within a broader children’s services model. The revised typology (presented in Table 5 below) also removed the ‘freestanding’ model from the ‘other’ category, in recognition of its unique features.

Table 5: Revised typology of the locations of YOTs in council structures

Children’s services		Community Safety	Freestanding	Other
All children and young people	Youth focus			
YOT is based with services for children and young people	YOT is based with services for young people only, particularly Connexions and youth service, but may also include substance misuse, teenage pregnancy and other services	Part of the same department as community safety	YOT is arm’s length from departmental structures and widely viewed as a freestanding organisation	In a department with both children and community safety Chief executive’s office when community safety not there

Table 6 summarises the changing location and management arrangements of the six case study site YOTs within council structures. As the table shows, four of the case study site YOTs experienced at least one change to their management arrangements over the past year and the models continue to evolve, with further changes anticipated in several areas. YOTs B and E are both currently in an interim situation, with a further move planned in the near future. The two ‘freestanding’ YOTs (C and F) have not experienced significant changes to their model due to their ‘arm’s-length’ distance from other council structures. While YOT F has new line management arrangements, and has also developed an additional tier of local YOT governance arrangements, the fundamental model has not changed.

Table 6: Changes to case study site YOTs' position within council structures

	Previous			Current (early 2007)			Future planned		
	YOT location	Managed by/with	Model typology	YOT location	Managed by/with	Model typology	YOT location	Managed by/with	Model typology
YOT A	Social Services Department-Children's Division	Assistant Director, Strategy and commissioning department	Children's services	Children's services	Assistant Director, Children, Youth and Community. With youth services, Connexions, sports, early years, play	Children's services	No change anticipated	No change anticipated	Children's services
YOT B	Chief Executive's Office	Head of Crime Reduction, within community safety team	Community safety	Children's services	Director of special needs and community support, social work, child health, educational psychology and special educational needs (SEN).	Children's services	Integrated young people's services	Director of integrated youth services, with connexions, youth service, teenage pregnancy	Youth focus
YOT C	Chief Executive's Office	Chief Executive	Freestanding	No change	No change	Freestanding	No change anticipated	No change anticipated	Freestanding
YOT D	Social Care and Health	Director of Social Care and Health	Children's services	Adult and housing services	Service director for community safety, within Community Safety division.	Community safety	No change anticipated	No change anticipated	Community safety
YOT E	Children's Services Authority – strategic directorate	Representative reporting to DCS	Children's services	Children and Young Peoples Services	Service Director for Children and Young People. With Children in Social Care, the Youth Service, SEN	Children's services	Adolescent services	Head of Adolescent Services, with Connexions youth service, participation, outdoor education, teenage pregnancy	Youth focus
YOT F	YOT operates across four local authorities	Line managed by deputy director children's services (County Council)	Freestanding	No change	No change	Freestanding	No change anticipated	No change anticipated	Freestanding

Rationale for YOT location within council structures

The rationale and process for determining the YOT's position within the council and in relation to children's services was discussed in the senior stakeholder interviews during Stage 2 of the research. The process of deciding the YOT's location varied between sites. For example, in YOT A the position of the YOT management board was decided in a review by an external consultant while in YOTs D and F there were wider debates within the local authorities concerned as to the YOT location, which explored a range of possibilities. In YOT E it was suggested that the location of the YOT within children's services was always assumed and had never been challenged to any great degree. In YOT C a recent review by the YOT management board in 2007 reaffirmed the existing model in a position statement.

One common factor in determining the position of the YOT was apparent across all case study sites and models; unsurprisingly in the context of an increasing drive to implement efficiencies, pragmatism was cited as an important, but in no case the sole reason for the YOT's ultimate position. For example, YOT B's move to children's services was triggered by the departure of the Head of Crime Reduction, the former strategic lead for the YOT and the decision not to reappoint to the post. When the YOT F cross-authority model was recently reviewed, a key reason for retaining the model was the economies of scale this provided when compared with the costs associated with disaggregating into four local YOTs. The portfolio size of senior management was cited as playing a part in location decisions in both YOT A and YOT D.

In children's services models (both 'all ages' and 'youth focus' versions) the following factors were cited as contributing to the rationale for the location:

- age group: the correspondence between the age of YOT service users with those of other services
- philosophy: a desire to view young people who offend as children and young people first and foremost
- operational links: a wish to improve links between the YOT and other services for children or young people.

In addition to these reasons, in the two sites where it is proposed that the YOT will move into a youth-focused model, the decision was also based on the following considerations:

- facilitating links between the preventative end of YOT work and other services
- developing a body of expertise around young people, which the YOT can benefit from as well as contribute to.

In the two 'freestanding' models, the historical position of the YOT was a key factor, as in both sites the YOT has been an arm's length from the council's departmental structures since its establishment.

In the single 'community safety' model among the case study sites the decision to move the YOT from social care and health to the community safety division in Adult and Community Services was reported to be based on a local priority of the council to improve community safety following a critical Audit Commission inspection report. In a subsequent review of structures, the YOT was identified as one of the key services to fall within a new directorate to drive forward the crime and disorder agenda. Parallels were also drawn between the YOT

and the Drug Action Team (DAT) (which also moved from social services to Adult Community Services at this time), for example, the fact they both have distinct work streams with their own performance targets.

Governance arrangements for the YOT

A recent annual inspection report of YOTs reported considerable variation in the strategic location of YOTs within council structures, but emphasised that the location of the YOT mattered less than clear lines of accountability from the chief executive through the YOT management board (HMIP, 2005). The latest annual report (HMIP, 2007) noted that a number of YOTs had moved across to be line managed within children's services and that, while this could enable closer working, it was important to maintain clear boundaries.

Despite the many structural changes outlined above, in five of the case study sites the YOTs have retained their separate management boards. In the sixth, YOT A, the separate YOT management board was dissolved and is now an agenda item on the Children and Young People Partnership Board (CYPPB), which includes community safety and other partners. In YOT D, consideration is currently being given to whether the YOT board will be merged into a community safety board with the CDRP and DAT.

In three of the six case study sites there have been changes and uncertainty in the chairing arrangements for the YOT management board over the past year; in two cases this resulted in the chief executive no longer acting as chair. In YOT E, the interim chair is a service director from within the children's services authority. In YOT F, it has recently been agreed that the DCS from each of the four constituent local authorities will chair the board on a rotational basis. In YOT D, the board was without a chair for a short period following the departure of the previous chair while the strategic arrangements for community safety were under review. The new chair is the Assistant Chief Officer Probation.

Strategic and management links

There is no uniform way in which strategic level relationships have developed between YOTs and children's service partners across the six case study sites. As would be expected, the YOTs based within children's models have increasingly developed links with children's structures. However, it is also the case that those YOTs located outside children's services have developed relationships with relevant children's services partners in line with the drive towards greater integration of services. Strategic relationships can operate in various ways and in different fora: at the YOT management board, through children's trust arrangements and within children's service authorities' management structures.

YOT management boards

As Table 4 shows, there is representation from the children's services authority on all the YOT management boards, and three boards are (or will shortly be) chaired by a children's service representative. However, the involvement of the DCS is not universal, featuring in only three areas. In Area A, YOT governance has become particularly closely integrated into children's services, the YOT management board being part of the broader children and young people's strategic board.

The situation in YOT F is more complex, given that it covers four local authorities. There are plans for the DCS from the four constituent authorities to chair the YOT management board on a rotational basis. Beneath the management board local 'steering groups' have been set up in each of the four local authorities as a second tier of governance. Two of these local

steering groups formally report into the strategic group for the children’s trust arrangements, and one reports to a sub-group. These local governance structures were created in 2006 to improve the YOT’s local accountability and responsiveness.

Table 7: Links between YOT management boards and children’s services

	Links between YOT management board and children’s services (CS)				
	DCS attends board	Board chaired by CSA representative	CSA representation on board	YOT board is part of children’s trust	YOT board reports into children’s trust
YOT A	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A
YOT B	X	X	✓	X	X
YOT C	✓	X	✓	X	X
YOT D	X	X	✓	X	X
YOT E	X	✓	✓	X	X
YOT F	Planned	Planned	✓	X	Two of the four local steering groups do

Children’s trust arrangements

Children’s trust arrangements, or other children’s strategic partnerships, in the case of study sites, were in varying stages of development. The specific structures and names of these arrangements also varied. The different names assigned to boards, partnerships and groups of senior managers make it difficult to make exact comparisons between sites, but YOT managers appear to be members of the strategic-level partnership board or executive group in all sites except YOT B, where the YOT’s line manager in children’s services represents the YOT in the strategic children’s partnership arrangements. However, in all sites, YOTs are members of various sub-groups and working groups, including those focusing on the children and young people’s plan, joint processes and specific groups of children.

Children’s services authorities

Those YOTs located within children’s services authorities (including the youth-focused structures) are clearly well placed to develop integrated working. For example, YOT managers located in children’s models, in addition to being line managed within children’s services, are expected to attend management meetings, thus supporting operational links with managers of other services. Nevertheless, in YOTs C and D, which are both managed outside children’s services, YOT management staff are also able to attend children’s services authority management meetings despite not being part of the department. In YOT F, the local area managers for the YOT occasionally attend the children’s services management meetings on a ‘guest’ basis.

Bridging the policy gap

There is evidence that the YOT can play a role in forging and brokering ‘cross-over’ between community safety and children’s services, linking them more strongly to each other and ensuring that the YOT is sufficiently involved in both, regardless of its location within structures. Some examples of this include a proposal in YOT D that the DCS would start attending the CDRP, while YOT C has proposed that relevant fora extend their membership

to include representatives from the other agenda; for example, the police now attend the CYPSP. YOT A delivers the same report to the CDRP and the children's partnership board (which also functions as the YOT management board), ensuring that both are kept informed and involved in the work of the YOT. Crossover is also furthered by community safety partners attending the children's partnership board to ensure it meets the national requirements for a YOT management board.

Table 8 summarises the range of links between YOTs and children's structures across the six case study sites.

Table 8: Strategic links between integrated children’s structures and YOTs in the case study sites six

Integrated children’s structure	Nature of link	Case study site								
		YOT A	YOT B	YOT C	YOT D	YOT E	YOT F			
							Local authority 1	Local authority 2	Local authority 3	Local authority 4
YOT links with children’s services authority	Line managed within children’s services	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	X
	YOT attendance at management meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Area managers attend occasionally on a guest basis			
	1-1 ad hoc meetings with DCS	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
YOT links with children’s trust/children’s strategic partnership arrangements	YOT manager on senior/executive group ¹⁰	N/A	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	YOT manager on partnership board	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
	YOT part of stakeholder network	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	YOT involvement in working groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	YOT attendance at district council children’s trust arrangement	N/A	unknown at time of writing	N/A	N/A	✓	X	X	X	X
	Other strategic links	YOT board is part of CT board	Line manager to YOT attends strategic group					Local YOT steering group reports to partnership	X	Local YOT steering group reports to partnership

¹⁰ Format of children’s trust arrangements vary. By this group, we mean the decision-making group/leadership team of executives which supports and drives the board.

Operational links between YOTs and other children's services

The extent to which services were linked at an operational level varied across the case study sites. Again, when considering YOTs' links at this level, it is crucial to bear in mind that the development of integrated teams, joint processes and closer working between services was in its early stages, and was continually evolving during the period of research. Some stakeholders interviewed in summer 2006 indicated that much of the focus thus far had been on setting up strategic structures, and that changes had not yet filtered down to delivery level. Therefore, at this stage it remains unclear how YOTs and children's services will actually work together at operational level, and the relative effectiveness of different approaches.

Integrated teams and joint working

The terminology in relation to integration is not always clear but the term 'integrated team' is used here to mean a team drawn from different disciplines and with different lines of accountability but located together and with a single point of referral. There was only a single integrated team in place in one of the case study sites at the time of interviews with senior stakeholders in summer 2006. One district covered by YOT E had established a children's trust model of delivery, which consisted of a multi-disciplinary team, including police and YOT staff, accepting and responding to referrals of children and young people with a broad range of needs. On a smaller scale, YOT D was piloting a Targeted Integrated Support Pilot (TISP) in one area of the city. A degree of progress had been made by the time of the update interviews with YOT managers in February 2007; one integrated team had recently become operational in YOT B (of 14 planned), and both YOT B and YOT E had clearly developed plans for integrated teams. However, plans in most of the other local authorities in the case study sites appeared to be still in the early stages of development.

Therefore we can report little evidence of YOTs and children's services working together within integrated teams. However, in those areas where a local team is in place, this has tended to focus on Youth Inclusion Support Panels (YISPs). YISPs are seen as an appropriate focus for integrated working due to their preventative/early intervention focus, which requires them to work together to deliver a joint package of support for the young person. In YOT D, it has recently been agreed that the YISP will be part of the delivery group trailing integrated services in one locality, and in YOT E the YISP workers are linked to local integrated teams.

In local authority 1 (part of YOT F) and YOT B, the YOT has negotiated that its core work will link to the integrated teams through named YOT workers, but that they will not be located within the teams. The rationale for this decision is the statutory nature of casework undertaken by the YOT, which means that the timescales for delivery are inflexible. Furthermore, as referral rates can vary widely across areas, it was felt to be inappropriate to allocate staff on a geographic basis. In YOT E it was not felt appropriate to link caseworkers to integrated children's teams as they have an early intervention focus, which is seen as outside the remit of the YOT. Apart from the few integrated teams discussed above, joint working between children's services and YOTs was said to occur on an ad hoc basis. Operational links seem to be generally implemented through protocols about respective roles and responsibilities, although there were some reports of joint working on specific projects relating to a particular service or group of young people. Often such work arises from existing working relationships between individuals and is not consistent across services.

Integrated processes

The Children Act 2004 recognised the need for systems and processes that would facilitate services in working more closely together. Arrangements for referral, assessment and information sharing would need to be aligned or integrated to prevent situations where a number of agencies were working with a young person in isolation from each other. Again, the development of integrated processes for children's services, such as the implementation of the CAF and shared information systems, appears to be at different stages in the case study sites. YOTs have commonly fed into the development of such processes by being involved in relevant working groups. Also, in some cases, the YOT had been involved in training for children's integrated information systems. However, at the time of interviews in summer 2006, integrated processes were not yet implemented across the local authorities, with the exception of isolated pilot projects and the recent introduction of an integrated information system in one site. It is therefore too early to know to what extent YOTs will be involved in these processes once they are implemented, or the further implications of such involvement.

Implications of the changes: stakeholder views

Having described the changes in local structures and working arrangements, we now move onto the views, perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders about the implications of these changes, drawing on interviews with senior strategic leads and surveys of managers and frontline practitioners in the case study sites.

The structural location of the YOT

Responses to the 2005/06 national survey of YOT managers revealed a sense of uncertainty about the implications of local structural arrangements in terms of the YOT's alignment between children's services and criminal justice partners. The majority of managers who expressed an opinion felt that their local structures would provide an appropriate balance. The exceptions to this were seven managers of YOTs located within a children's services model, who felt that this had potentially aligned them too closely with children's services, and one respondent from a community safety model who was concerned that the YOT may not be close enough to children's services.

The 2007 survey of operational managers and practitioners in both YOT and partner agencies in the six case study sites also addressed this issue. Regardless of their local structural model, respondents from YOTs thought that their YOT was well-balanced between children's services and community safety partners and able to maintain the focus on its core aims. The majority of practitioners and managers from other agencies also supported this view.

Maintaining this balance, and successful relationships, between community safety and children's agendas was challenging and time consuming, particularly for YOT managers, given the apparently increasing numbers of partnerships to service and meetings to attend.

I'm just feeling that we need to strengthen [social work links] at the moment and it's coincidental with moving to the children's department and putting a lot of effort in making sure we're credible on the community safety side, it's one of those things that if you strengthen one thing you weaken another, so it's keeping all the things at a good enough level.

(YOT manager)

YOT B has experienced two structural moves, from community safety into children's services and subsequently into a youth-focused location. Moving into children's services was felt by a wide range of stakeholders to have been advantageous in strengthening relationships with children's services, which had historically not been as strong as those with community safety partners. For example, management meetings within children's services brought the YOT manager into contact with managers of other services that were dealing with the same service users as the YOT. However, in order to maintain the confidence of community safety partners following this move, some resources were refocused into a specific piece of work around Priority and Prolific Offenders (PPO). It was feared that the planned move into a youth-focused model could limit the YOT's involvement in the children's services integrated teams, and it was recognised that the YOT will need to ensure it maintains strong links to these teams in order to ensure access to safeguarding and looked-after children services.

In order to address concerns that being located in a community safety model would hinder the YOT's opportunities to feed into the children's agenda, YOT D has re-structured internally into two teams, one of which focuses on preventative work. It is hoped this will facilitate relationships with children's partners, as prevention is a key focus of the children's strategic partnership.

While it was suggested by some senior YOT stakeholders that the freestanding YOTs (C and F) could, by dint of their independent position, be well-placed to exert influence on both community safety and children's partners, and maintain the profile of the YOT, this perception was not necessarily shared by partners, some of whom felt that their relationships with the YOT were not always strong enough in practice.

Most YOT respondents felt that they had been kept informed about developments in local structures, children's services, and the YOT's place within them, but – as expected – this was more likely to be true of managers than frontline workers, who felt somewhat less well-informed. Amongst the respondents from partner agencies, those from children's and youth services were more likely to have been kept aware of structural changes and developments in relation to the YOT and children's services than partners from community safety organisations.

Power and influence

New line management arrangements for the YOT

Changes in line management arrangements have seen three of the six YOTs acquire a new layer of management above them, while another two have been 'pulled higher up the strategic chain'. It was too early to tell what the impact of these changes would be, and views about the advantages and disadvantages of each were mixed. Where the YOT manager is being line managed by a less senior post than previously, it was felt by some that this could reduce the YOT's strategic influence and result in it becoming 'buried within council structures', potentially hindering its autonomy. A counter-argument was that the YOT could benefit from receiving greater attention than a more senior manager with a larger portfolio could offer. Some YOT managers, however, in moving up within structures had taken on more strategic responsibilities that their new line managers did not have time to undertake, which was felt to potentially increase the influence of the YOT. In two cases, new line managers were reported to have limited awareness and understanding of the YOT. In both

areas there were hopes that this understanding would increase, enabling the new line managers to play a role in building the profile of the YOT.

YOT management boards and strategic partnerships

As we have seen, the way – and level – in which the YOT is included in strategic planning arrangements varies across the sites. Attending or being represented on the strategic level children’s trust arrangements, such as boards or senior executive groups, was seen by stakeholders as essential if the YOT was to influence strategic planning and service delivery. In the first round of interviews, concerns were expressed by YOT managers that partners might not understand the discrete YOT identity when integrating the YOT into management arrangements. However, it appears these fears have not as yet been borne out. Nevertheless, ensuring that youth offending issues have a sufficiently high profile within these frameworks is an ongoing challenge for YOTs.

A perceived benefit of YOT A’s management board being integrated into the children’s strategic partnership was that it provides a regular forum where youth offending was discussed with senior level stakeholders, thus raising the profile of the issue. This was felt to be an improvement on the previous arrangement with a separate YOT management board at which the attendance of senior-level partners was reported to be poor. On the other hand, one partner in YOT B did not believe that youth offending issues were given sufficient prominence at the families and children’s trust board, as the YOT was represented through a service director covering a large portfolio and who therefore had other interests to promote.

In YOT F, views varied across partners from the four constituent local authorities as to whether the YOT had sufficient profile, reflecting different local linkages. In one local authority, a partner felt that the YOT did not have enough influence within children’s services, and in another authority it was noted that the YOT had not been involved in the working groups for the Local Area Agreement (LAA) process which was taken as a sign that the YOT was not high on the ‘radar’ of the council. In a third area, the YOT had initially been tied into the children’s trust arrangements through a sub-group of a sub-group, but recently had been invited to join the senior executive group. In the fourth authority the YOT was described as being an equal partner in the process for developing the children and young people’s plan.

Involvement in the LAA process was felt to be an important arena in which YOTs can become involved at strategic level. YOT E was pleased with its role in contributing through working groups to both the children and young people’s block and the safer and stronger communities block.

Whatever the arrangements for strategic planning, it was noted by many interviewees that the YOT prevention strategy was a key point of alignment with children’s services. The relocation of three of the YOTs in the sample to be managed alongside other preventative services highlights the significance of developing links with youth services and Connexions, rather than simply focusing on statutory services.

Interviewees from various settings suggested that one advantage of being managed outside children’s services (either in a community safety, youth services or freestanding model) was that it could potentially facilitate the YOT’s ability to advocate more strongly for young people who offend and challenge children’s services to improve their provision. There were

concerns raised that YOTs based within children's services could find this more difficult, and stakeholders from YOT E expressed the hope that this role of the YOT would be easier once it moved to its new location within youth services.

The capacity of YOT management

YOT managers saw building and maintaining relationships with partners as an essential element of their role, and therefore reported being prepared to commit significant time to it. However, this presented a major challenge in terms of the time needed to attend meetings across two large policy areas, and to prepare and read all the necessary reports and other relevant documentation for these partnerships. Meetings may clash with each other or with other commitments and decisions have to be made about conflicting priorities, limiting the regularity of YOT attendance at important fora. Such pressures were reported to be hindering the development of links, particularly at district level, as well as diverting management time from service delivery. These pressures are reported to be impacting on managers, deputy managers and team managers in the case study site YOTs.

The value of integrated processes

The development of integrated processes was at a varying, and predominantly early, stage in the case study sites at the time of interviews in summer 2006, but YOTs appear to have had an active role in most areas. Given that local systems had not yet fully taken shape, it was difficult for stakeholders to reflect on the implications for the YOT. However, it was hoped that integrated processes involving the YOT would particularly benefit young people at the preventative and early offending end of the spectrum. Through improved information sharing it was hoped that those at risk of offending would be identified early, enabling them to be offered appropriate support and preventative interventions.

A challenge identified in relation to the YOTs' involvement with the CAF and integrated information systems was that of linking the separate YOT systems (such as *Asset*, *Onset*, and specific databases) to the broader local systems and processes. However, this challenge was not seen as insurmountable, and in some areas an interface between YOT systems and children's services systems had already been agreed. At the time of update interviews with YOTs in February 2007, it was suggested that guidance relating to *Asset* links to CAF (YJB, 2006) had helped in this area.

The principle of information sharing was also discussed in the focus groups for young service users and their parents. Young people felt that this should only happen with their consent, and expressed concerns that if access to information was too easy they would risk being judged on the basis of their past behaviour. However, they could recognise that information sharing might be useful on occasion in making sure that appropriate support or help is offered. Parents were more likely to recognise the benefits of sharing information between agencies in certain circumstances, for example to access appropriate preventative services, or to prevent young people 'falling between agencies'. However, both parents and young people were uneasy about information being routinely shared with police or employers, and both groups recognised the importance of sharing information when safety was an issue, for example in cases of child abuse or self-harm.

Delivering joined-up services

As already described, during the period of the research developments were primarily occurring at a strategic, rather than operational, level. Moves towards developing integrated services for children were in most cases in their infancy. The following section draws on findings from the survey of practitioners and service managers within the case study sites in 2007, together with the views of young people and parents as expressed in focus groups. Some additional input is provided from senior stakeholders.

Overall impressions

The value of integration, at least in part, will ultimately be judged on the difference it has made to outcomes for young people. The 2005/06 national survey found that most YOT managers felt that the overall impact on service delivery of their local structural arrangements would be more positive than negative. The minority who feared a more negative impact were more likely to be based within children's services than other models. By the time of the 2007 survey, respondents from all agencies, including the YOT, perceived their own service to be fairly well-integrated into children's structures. YOT practitioners reported positive working relationships with community safety partners including good links and joint working. Interestingly, respondents perceived that the YOT had a higher profile among community service partners than children's services but that, from the YOT practitioners' point of view, children's services partners were felt to have a better (and improving) understanding of the needs of young people who offend than community safety partners. This issue of attitudes towards young people who offend will be returned to shortly.

A common thread running through interviews with YOT managers and their partners was that YOT staff as a whole were seen as being committed to partnership working, and willing 'partnership people'. This was seen as an important factor in ensuring successful local joint working. However, a minority of YOT practitioners expressed concern that changes at structural level would not, on their own, be enough to bring about changes to practice, implying that further work would be needed to develop appropriate working cultures and practices across services.

Changing services for young people who offend

Senior stakeholders across the case study sites cited a number of instances of good practice in joint working. The focus tended to be on the preventative end of YOT provision, where stakeholders felt the greatest potential lay for an effective interface between children's services and the YOT. The YOT practitioners and service managers who responded to the survey echoed this, reporting that there was greater access to preventative services for early offenders and those at risk of offending than for young people generally or, more particularly, for young people in or leaving custody. It was also felt that this was resulting in improved outcomes being achieved for this group.

However, according to both parents and young people we spoke to in the focus groups, access to services was more likely to occur once a child had offended. From the parents' point of view, such support was often felt to come too late. Many spoke of having often tried, and failed, to access help at an earlier stage from a range of agencies including social workers, youth workers and the YOT, when problems had been less acute. Young people could also see the value of greater access to preventative services.

Senior stakeholders recognised that substantial additional work would be required to improve access to mainstream services for young people who offend and to build effective operational links between the YOT and other agencies, particularly education (but also accommodation providers and social care).

Reflecting some of the concerns of these senior stakeholders, the young people we spoke to were able to provide numerous examples of mainstream education being unable to meet their needs or address their behaviour, other than by exclusion, either from class or, more formally, from the school. Both parents and young people noted that schools focused very strongly on teaching and educational issues, often at the expense of addressing students' wider problems.

Joint work with individual young people

A mixed picture emerged from the practitioner survey when it came to joint working between the YOT and its partner agencies around individual young people, suggesting that while some local difficulties remain, a number of positive working relationships have been established. This respondent clearly recognises recent improvements in this area:

I have noticed a big difference in joint working since coming into the service in January 2006. I feel that there are a lot of professionals pulling together to put together a tailored package for the young person – YISP especially.

(YOT practitioner)

The survey reveals generally high levels of support for the principle of integrated working. However, some practitioners from partner agencies report limited understanding of the work of the YOT, which was proving a hindrance to joint work. There appears to be a lack of clarity regarding mutual responsibilities, which respondents felt could be addressed by joint training and/or guidance.

Young people also approved of the idea of joint working, feeling that this would help get problems 'sorted out properly' and could lead to greater understanding. Parents were also strongly in support, some having had positive experiences of case conferences and panels, particularly valuing the opportunities for open discussion and transparent accountability. Parents were also keen on the concept of a key worker, as they perceived that such a post would reduce the current duplication and repetition of information and provide a point of continuity. Young people also approved in principle of key workers, but were quick to stress that it would be vital that they got on well with this individual.

YOT staff expressed some concern about the lack of resources available for joint working. They felt that current high workloads were leading to less effective services for young people while uncertainty about continued funding for preventative work was a concern for the future. Nevertheless, there was also recognition that such constraints should not be used as excuses for services not trying to work together.

Attitudes towards young people who offend

The implications of young people being 'labelled' once services knew that they had offended was discussed in more detail by the groups of parents and young people and a number of examples were offered. It was felt that this varied from agency to agency and worker to worker. However, it was generally agreed that schools and teachers, and also the police, were

most likely to treat young people differently once they were known to have offended. For example, when one school was informed that a young person was on a Referral Order, he was thereafter felt to be under constant scrutiny and liable to 'get the blame for everything'. However, parents were also able to cite instances of supportive and helpful individuals within schools, including teachers and learning mentors. Young people reported that Connexions and youth workers were less likely to react in this judgmental way than other groups of practitioners. Parents also reported feeling 'blamed' by workers and agencies for the behaviour of their children.

Young people also expressed some harsh views about young people who offend and did not absolve them of personal responsibility, even where they were facing multiple problems. They said that services could not help young people who offend unless they wanted to help themselves. There were certain attributes that would enable young people to engage with practitioners, however. The young people participating in the focus groups wanted to work with practitioners who were approachable, respectful, not patronising or judgmental, committed, caring and reliable. YOT workers were described as having many of these characteristics, and parents echoed the views of young people, regarding YOT staff as generally being more helpful and approachable than other professionals. Parents also thought it was important that workers could encourage and motivate young people.

Summary of research findings

Before going on to consider the implications for YOTs, their partner organisations, and the commissioners of children's services, it is useful to pull together and reflect upon the findings from this exploratory research study. At the outset, it was anticipated that the challenges to successful partnership working between YOTs and children's services would be found in five key areas, as listed in the first section of this report:

- governance arrangements
- geography
- planning and partnership issues
- the YOT's client group
- diverging policy aims.

Two years later, it is interesting to consider the extent to which those original predictions have been borne out, and whether additional challenges have emerged.

In terms of governance and management, YOTs are required to sit between children's services and community safety, without being engulfed by either; however the YJB was not prescriptive about the best model for achieving such a balance. With hindsight, it appears that this lack of guidance was wise, as no single dominant model appears to have emerged. Indeed the research uncovered a plethora of different arrangements, including 'standalone' YOTs, co-location with adult or community services, and those managed within various directorates of the new Children's Services Authorities.

For our six case study YOTs, the research period was characterised by instability, uncertainty and change as CSAs began to be established within local authorities, and children's trust arrangements continued to evolve. This entailed reviews, restructurings and temporary transitional arrangements. Some of the case study YOTs underwent a series of moves between departments and directorates within the relatively short research period. In some cases their ultimate location within structures was explained by simple reference to historical factors or pragmatism rather than anything more strategic or visionary. However, elsewhere, other factors determined the YOT's location, including a locally perceived need to focus on community safety (placing the YOT within adult and community services), a philosophical view of considering young people who offend as children first (placing the YOT within children's services), and a bringing together of services for adolescents (locating the YOT with other youth-focused services). Perhaps surprisingly, regardless of particular local arrangements, the majority of YOT managers surveyed felt that balance between community safety and children's services was about right; those expressing concern about imbalance were more likely to be found within children's services. Practitioners within the case study sites, from both YOTs and partner agencies, also felt that the balance within their local arrangements was good.

As a result of these structural changes, some YOTs have acquired new layers of management above them, while others have had such layers removed. Five of the six case study YOTs have retained their discrete management boards throughout these changes, although some chairing arrangements were in flux. Two boards were no longer chaired by the chief executive. The CSA was represented on the board of all six YOT management bodies, and chaired three of them. The DCS sat on three of the boards. It is too early to assess the full implications of these structural changes for the YOT in terms of its influence on local strategy and planning.

Geography presented a number of challenges. For county-wide YOTs, the sheer numbers of partners involved at both county and district level could feel overwhelming and prove a hindrance to developing integrated working across the authority. This combined with the scale of the geographical area posed a major challenge to the development of co-located services. For YOTs serving urban unitary and metropolitan authorities, there were fewer partners within the local authority to consider, although the likelihood of services straddling YOT boundaries was greater, leading to a need to create additional out-of-authority partnerships. Being smaller, such YOTs typically had fewer staff to service their partnerships. A related issue was the fact that smaller YOTs were likely to have less senior YOT managers and a consequent reduction in influence at strategic level.

As far as planning issues were concerned, as described above, strategic relationships and structures were at various stages of development in the six areas during the research period. Nevertheless, a common feature across all was the significance of the YOT's preventative strategy as a key point of alignment with children's and youth services. YOT managers reported having to spend a lot of time attending strategic meetings, involved as they have to be with both children's services and community safety bodies. Integrated processes, for example common assessment and information systems, were not fully developed in any of the case study sites, although some protocols were being developed, particularly in relation to information sharing.

There was little evidence of partnership working filtering down to operational level during the period of research. Across all six case study sites we only found a couple of examples of integrated teams on the ground; these were both focused on preventative services. From the point of view of families, this development should be welcomed; both young people and parents were clear that more preventative and early-intervention services were required. Other examples of joint working existed, but these were ad hoc and based on existing relationships between individuals or services. YOT practitioners, perhaps because of their history of multi-disciplinary working, were regarded as willing partnership workers, however, their specific statutory duties and the nature of casework created challenges for the development of integrated teams.

At the start of the research, we wondered whether the fact that some of the pathfinder children's trusts had a targeted focus would impact on their relationship with YOTs, which themselves have a specific and clearly-defined client group. This particular issue became less significant as children's trusts pathfinders gave way to 'children's trust arrangements' and new CSAs assumed more prominence within the research. Nevertheless, the YOT's client group could affect their position within local structures; in three of the case study areas, the YOT ended up located alongside services and agencies focusing on adolescents. Many YOT clients have multiple needs and problems in addition to their offending behaviour, yet parents and young people reported that often these problems only started to be addressed once the young person got into trouble. Even then, it frequently proved very difficult to access appropriate support, particularly with regard to education. Whether the new structures and developing working arrangements will have an impact on outcomes for young people who offend and vulnerable children and young people at risk of offending, it is too early to say. However, managers and practitioners were broadly optimistic, judging that recent changes were more likely on balance to have a positive than a negative impact on outcomes.

When we started this research there appeared to be some policy contradictions at central government level, for example the respect and anti-social behaviour agendas being somewhat at odds with the ethos of *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters*. Recent changes over the summer of 2007 may go some way towards smoothing out some of these contradictions; again it is too early to make a judgement. At local level, we have seen that the political administration and its current policy priorities can impact upon where the YOT is located within the authority, communicating clear symbolic messages about the way in which young people who offend are viewed locally. For example, in one case study area, a recent Audit Commission inspection report had led to a focus on crime and disorder, resulting in the YOT being placed in Adult and Community Services; whereas in another site, a more holistic approach to young people who offend meant that the YOT fell naturally within children's services.

4 Conclusions and implications

The nature of integration

If you're saying we lose our identity to become part of this homogeneous mass of people, well no, no. Because I think we've got quite a particular focus. We've got clear outcomes, we're clear on the work that we have to achieve with young people, parents and victims of crime. So these are our groups, those are our groups of people. Integrated teams for children will not have that focus.

(YOT representative)

It is important to remember that closer involvement of the YOTs with children's services is not an end in itself; the driver towards greater integration of children's services as directed in the Children Act 2004 is a wish to place the child at the centre of service provision in order to improve their outcomes. This is not entirely new; inquiries into the deaths of abused children have repeatedly urged agencies to work more closely together. A review undertaken by the Scottish Executive (Brown and White, 2006) suggested that, although the evidence was available to demonstrate what can go wrong if agencies do not work together, there is a lack of evidence to confirm that better outcomes will be achieved if they do. Instead, much of the available literature is concerned with the processes involved in achieving closer working relationships, and the Scottish review highlights the following barriers:

- concern about funding integrated services
- cultural differences between professionals
- clarity about roles and responsibilities and the purpose of partnership working
- leadership
- organisational climate.

The authors also identified a definitional problem, with terms such as integration, partnership, joint working and multi-agency working being used interchangeably. They suggest a continuum with full integration at one end of the spectrum and agencies working autonomously at the other, and separate but co-ordinated services in the middle.

In the context of YOTs, it is clear that the proposal is not that they should be fully integrated into children's services. *Sustaining the Success* stated that YOTs were expected to retain a separate identity, but that closer working with children's services would improve access to services for young people who offend and, in turn, enable the YOT to contribute to the social inclusion agenda of these services. The aspiration was shared by stakeholders within this study.

A shared vision

I think that their [the YOT's] involvement in broader children's services will stop the compartmentalising of children, which I feel really strongly about – that once children get into the court system they are relinquished, they are seen as culpable, blameworthy and they're not treated as children in need in the same way as other groups of children are, although in fact they've got the characteristics of these other needy groups.... I think the closer involvement of YOTs with children's services will mean that we don't cut young people off at a time when they actually need a more integrated service. So I think we can only gain from it.

(Children's services representative)

One of the complexities for YOTs in achieving this position has been the political tightrope they are required to tread, balancing their key aim of preventing offending against the need to promote children's welfare in partnership with other agencies. This tension stems in part from government policy between 1998 and 2007, with a clear division between approaches to young people who offend, those who display anti-social behaviour and children considered to be in need. Stakeholders within this study expressed a wish for this division to be bridged, with a shared vision both at national and local government level. There are indications that this is emerging with the Minister for Children, Schools and Families recently taking on some responsibility for young people who offend. Early indications are that there will be a new Joint Youth Justice Unit across the DCSF and the MoJ and an emerging Youth Directorate within the DCSF that will lead on developing approaches to young people at risk of poor outcomes, including those at risk of offending behaviour, through the Youth Task Force. It remains to be seen how this will develop, and what the implications will be for the YJB's preventative strategies. What is less clear is the role that the DCSF will play with young people who are more heavily involved with the youth justice system, including young people in and leaving custody. *Care Matters*, the government's White Paper on children in the care system, makes it clear that children's services authorities must continue to plan for such children when they go into custody. The challenge remains, however, of engaging children's services more generally in the service provision for young people who offend in or for those leaving custody.

The changes at national government level need to be mirrored at a local level in order to support the development of coherent strategies across criminal justice and children's services. At the heart of the emerging relationship between YOTs and children's services is this fundamental issue of whether all partners have a shared 'vision' of young people who offend, and if so, whether this vision portrays them as children first (specifically as children in need) and offenders second. If this is the case, then shared 'ownership' of young people who offend among partner agencies could become a reality, including a joint commitment to the youth crime prevention agenda and the provision of services to meet their broader needs.

I hope that with the restructure of social care that this will bring a more co-ordinated approach to the delivery of services, and an acceptance that young people who offend also have needs to be met.

(Children's services representative)

Young people and their parents support the need for change, describing their difficulties in accessing services across the divide. They were aware of the issues of blame and personal responsibility, but were also able to identify the components of a service that might engage them most effectively in avoiding offending behaviour.

An ideal model?

The fact that the YOS isn't in the children and young people's department doesn't mean we can't forge strong and effective partnerships. It's a matter of making that happen.

(Youth service representative)

YOTs need to retain a separate identity but also be in a position to exert influence on strategic planning, commissioning and service delivery in the interest of young people who offend. Is there a clear structural model that will best enable them to do this? The backdrop to this research was a constantly changing landscape with reorganisations taking place in many authorities and within partner agencies, most significantly in relation to the development of Children's Service Authorities, a development which rather overtook the initial focus on children's trusts. This brought large-scale changes for all the case study sites, some of which are still in a state of upheaval and transition. While able to create a broad typology of structures in which YOTs might find themselves within these new structures, we also have to acknowledge that the territory is extremely complex, and that every situation has its own unique features. We found a complex matrix of factors, all of which have some bearing on where YOTs may be located within evolving local structures, including issues of size, history, geography, political administration and finances, although in many cases these were overridden by pragmatic decision-making.

How YOTs were able to maintain a balanced position between the children's and community safety agendas at both strategic and operational levels necessarily varied according to their location within structures, but all were conscious of the need to do this. Developing partnerships and attending meetings was taking an increasing amount of YOT managers' time, especially where there were numerous potential partners and fora to attend in two-tier authorities. A strong message emerging across the case study sites, however, was that there was no universal model that should be applied across all settings. The optimum arrangements will vary from place to place, depending on a range of dynamic local factors. Whatever the model, adaptations will need to be made to ensure that closer relationships with one set of partners are not established at the expense of others. For example, YOTs within a children's model will need to ensure they develop robust links with police and probation. In addition, the model itself was not always the critical factor in determining the success of relationships between YOTs and children's partners. More important was the approach of key personnel and action taken to transcend structures and forge relationships. YOT managers and staff in these six case study sites were all committed to developing partnerships; the extent to which this is replicated across the country is not known.

Current level of involvement between YOTs and children's services

The responsibility of safeguarding rests with the Children's Trust, and the safeguarding board is there to make sure that the Children's Trust is doing it. Now actually the same thing really should apply with youth offending. The advocacy for youth offending should not be the responsibility of the YOT. It should be inside the trust and the YOT should be, in a sense, almost commissioned to do what's necessary. Now that doesn't feel to me to be the relationship yet. I think it'll evolve.

(Children's services representative)

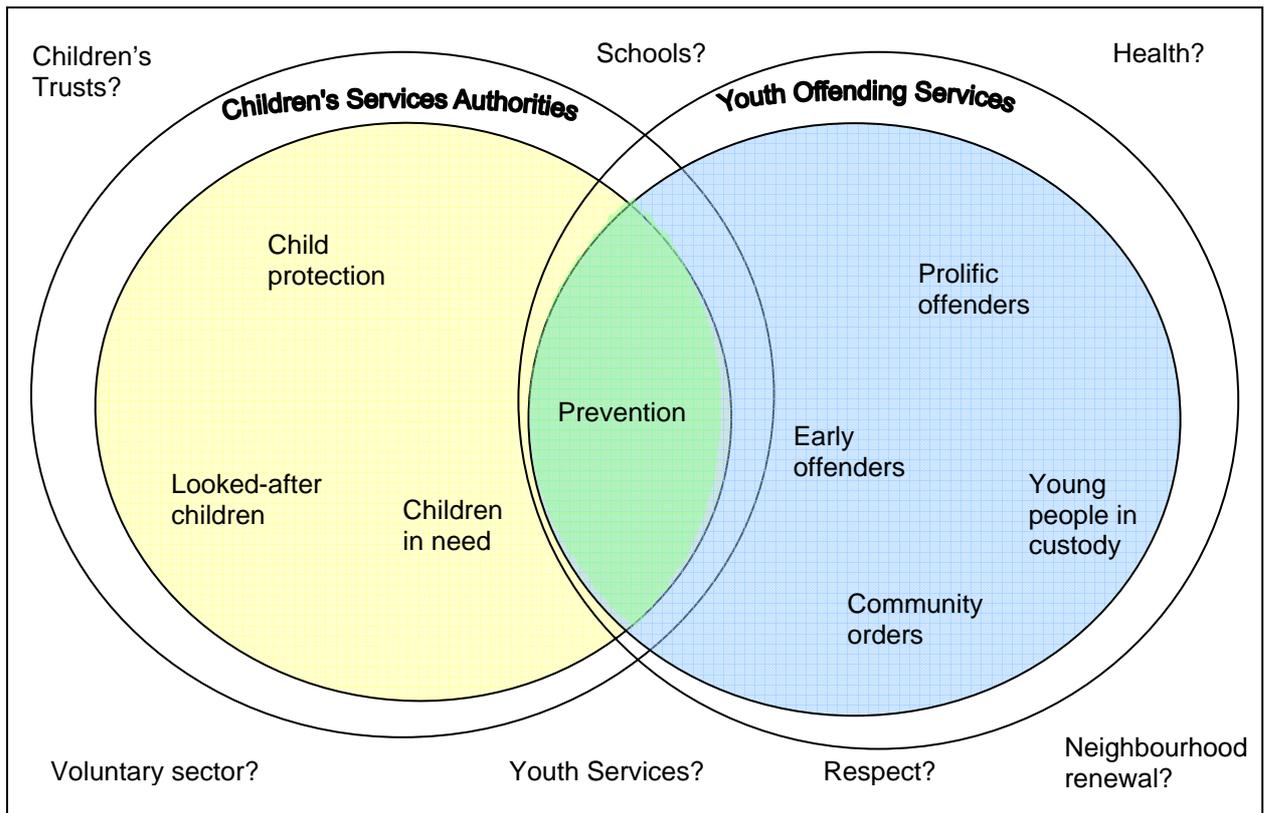
In most authorities, major changes affecting the YOT's management arrangements have now happened at structural level, although some further shifts are anticipated in a couple of areas. The focus is now shifting towards developing joint processes (including planning, commissioning and information sharing) and piloting integrated services. It has not, therefore, been possible during the period of this research to assess the impact of new arrangements on service delivery or outcomes for young people. Only a few isolated examples of integrated teams were found; in most cases the YISP being the focus for the YOT's involvement. Young people and parents broadly welcomed – with some important caveats – the proposed move towards more integrated working, including information sharing and access to more preventative services, and they were able to identify areas in which improvement was required, particularly the education service.

Where closer involvement was most evident was in the arena of preventative work, particularly with young people referred to YISPs. For these young people the constitution of the panels and the requirement to have an individualised action plan that addressed their needs lent itself to multi-agency approaches. Similarly, in spite of some concerns, the respect agenda has been seen as an opportunity for joint working across a range of separate services. This was less evident with young people who had committed several offences or who were in custody, where the YOT was more likely to be seen as the responsible agency. All agencies have areas of work which are their core business: children's social care is the agency identified with meeting the needs of children at risk of abuse or in care; schools are seen as focused on educational attainment. Although agencies are aware of the need to co-operate, this division of responsibilities can still lead to conflict between services about whose job it is to meet different aspects of need.

Returning to the model of integrated children's services diagram presented in Figure 1, it is clear that this aspirational model has not yet been achieved with respect to meeting the needs of young people who offend and vulnerable children and young people at risk of offending. Nevertheless, this research into the developing relationship between children's trusts and YOTs reveals some early signs of integration, particularly where preventative services are concerned (e.g. YISP). Joint work around children in need and early stage offenders look likely to be the next areas to benefit from integrated and services, as depicted in the diagram. However, other issues are depicted as being further away from the area of overlap because they continue to be seen as the primary responsibility of either CSA or the YOT. Integrated working with these young people appears to be hampered by a range of historical, cultural and practical barriers; this despite the large overlap in client groups between, for example, looked-after children and prolific offenders.

Figure 2 represents this in diagrammatic form with overlapping circles representing the activities of CSAs and YOTs (other agencies and potential partners are, for simplicity's sake, placed around the periphery). Children and young people receiving preventative services are placed in the area of overlap, representing the most fully integrated services at the current time. Over time, the area of overlap should increase, with the result that more and more children and young people will gradually be supported by integrated services. However, children and young people with the most serious and specialised needs are likely to be the last to feel the benefit.

Figure 2: The current extent of integration between YOTS and CSAs



Impact on outcomes

I think the benefits in the main have yet to be realised. The clear benefits are that you have a more seamless service for young people and parents as they migrate. Young people get more access to mainstream services to meet their ongoing needs, as opposed to their focused needs. Those have got to be the benefits, and that there's a greater efficiency of working between us all, that we're not duplicating ...and that policies and procedures all tie up to support that seamless transfer for the young people and parents. Those are the benefits, but we're a bit off it yet.

(Connexions representative)

At the time of the study, the effects of the changes had not filtered down significantly to frontline staff or service users, and it is too early to consider whether outcomes have, or will,

improve. It will be important that mechanisms are in place to evaluate outcomes for young people rather than service outputs, although attributing changes to closer involvement may be difficult to evidence. Meanwhile, YOTs welcome the fact that their data has been taken into account within the performance and inspections processes of the APA, CPA and the JAR. The new PSAs are both cross-cutting and outcomes-focused, which means that the effectiveness of partnerships will also be held to account, as well as the performance of single agencies. They include the reduction of first-time entrants to the youth justice system and the disproportionate numbers of Black and Minority Ethnic young people within the system. These will require a response from a range of services if outcomes are to be improved and will be a clear measure of the effectiveness of their increasing involvement. The LAAs were the forerunner of this approach; YOTs have welcomed the opportunity to contribute to their local improvement targets and will continue to do so.

Linked to this, the developing arrangements for the joint commissioning of services to deliver shared outcomes is also seen as a positive opportunity. YOTs are keen to stress that they have both financial and human resources to bring to the table as well as benefits to gain in these processes. For example, YOTs have expertise in multi-disciplinary working, skills in working with vulnerable and challenging young people and budgets to procure services. Young people who offend are often in need of supported accommodation, as are care-leavers and other vulnerable teenagers. If resources are shared and services jointly commissioned, it is hoped that this will increase both the range and suitability of such services for young people within an area.

5 Learning from this research: some considerations for YOTs

The sheer variety and evolving nature of different local contexts, structures and arrangements we found in just six case study sites suggests that it would not be appropriate, even if possible, to produce a neat set of recommendations that will apply comfortably to all YOTs, now and in the future. The territory is too complex and too changeable for generalisations to be drawn. There is a need for local solutions to address each complex and unique set of circumstances.

It must be acknowledged that effective joint working is not easy to achieve. A successful model for increasing involvement between YOTs and children's services, and indeed other services, is not contained within formal structures, but in a dynamic response to overcoming challenges. Rather than providing prescriptive answers arising from the research, therefore, in this final section we offer some questions that should be considered at local level if YOTs are to work effectively with other services for children and young people, regardless of the particular structural model or local context in which they find themselves.

These questions take account of the YOTs' need to maintain a balanced position between the children's and community safety agendas, and to contribute to the aims of each (improving outcomes for children and young people and making communities safer), as well as the YOT's own over-arching aim of preventing offending by young people. Staff in the case study sites shared their own experiences of problem solving with us in order to identify the key ingredients that need to be in place for YOTs to achieve this. These ingredients will not take the same shape or be realised in the same way in all settings, but it is intended that, by asking the following questions, YOTs will be supported in establishing arrangements that will work for them.

Ingredient	Benefits	Questions to ask
The YOT has an effective management board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The work of the YOT is of high quality and it is held to account ▪ The YOT is well-supported and assisted in resolving problems ▪ YOT's management enables it to achieve a balance between children's and community safety agencies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the board have appropriate senior level membership? 2. Do board members demonstrate commitment by regular attendance and participation? 3. How effective and authoritative is the chair? 4. How is the board linked to children's trust arrangements?
The YOT has a clear identity and status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The statutory responsibilities of the YOT to prevent offending and reoffending are recognised by partners ▪ The YOT is acknowledged as a key player in the development of local strategy and planning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is the YOT placed to exert influence on key partners? 2. How does the position and seniority of the YOT manager (and their line manager) impact upon the profile of the YOT? 3. Does the YOT manager

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The skills of the YOT in multi-disciplinary working and engaging young people are recognised and valued 	<p>provide strong leadership?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Does the YOT have sufficient resources to provide a high quality service? 5. How effectively does the YOT communicate with partners, including children and families, about the contribution it can make?
There is a champion for young people who offend at a strategic level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The needs of young people who offend are recognised, understood and given priority in local strategic planning ▪ Outcomes for young people who offend are recognised as an important element within <i>Every Child Matters</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who advocates for young people who offend when decisions are being made? 2. Is the YOT manager seen as a significant partner by other agencies?
The YOT has strong links with both children's and criminal justice partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agencies recognise each other's statutory responsibilities ▪ Core services for young people who offend are linked with mainstream children's services ▪ There are mechanisms in place to develop joint services for children and young people 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the YOT have a visible and sufficiently senior presence on all partnerships for both children and community safety? 2. How is the YOT represented at CSA's management meetings? 3. Does the YOT use its links to ensure that other appropriate agencies are represented on local strategic and management bodies? 4. Are links between children's and criminal justice agencies dependent on the YOT or are there other mechanisms in place?
Youth crime – and the prevention of youth crime – is included in all key plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plans for young people who offend are an integral part of local strategic and service delivery ▪ All agencies are clear about their joint responsibility to improve outcomes for all children, including those who offend, and those in custody 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent does the Children and Young People's Plan address the needs of young people who offend? 2. Are young people who offend mentioned in both the children's and community safety blocks of the LAA? 3. How well do LSCB plans address the needs of young people who offend, including those in custody?
There is a shared local vision for all children which includes young people who offend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agencies share a commitment to achieving agreed targets and outcomes ▪ There is joint ownership of 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are young people who offend seen as children first (whilst still recognising their particular criminal justice needs)? 2. Is youth crime seen as an

	<p>the services needed by young people who offend and their families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is an understanding of the links between needs not met and offending and a joint commitment to tackling the causes of crime ▪ Young people who offend and their families are not stigmatised because of their behaviour ▪ Young people who offend have access to the same services as other young people 	<p>issue for everyone, or is it seen as solely the responsibility of the YOT?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. How well is the YOT fulfilling its responsibilities within Every Child Matters? 4. Do other agencies represent the interests of young people who offend in the absence of the YOT? 5. Can services challenge each other constructively to meet the needs of young people who offend in their area?
YOTs are fully engaged in joint commissioning arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Services are commissioned efficiently, minimise duplication and ensure transparent use of resources ▪ Young people and their families have access to a range of services ▪ Seamless services are provided based on need rather than agency thresholds 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are the needs of young people who offend considered when services are commissioned? 2. What expertise and resources can the YOT bring to the table? 3. How can resources be deployed more effectively across agency boundaries?
There are integrated processes in place between the YOT and other children's services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information about young people at risk of poor outcomes is shared at an early stage, and interventions offered ▪ Services are more efficient, with less duplication ▪ Joint services will be developed enabling young people to receive a holistic response to their needs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is the YOT contributing to the development of such processes? 2. How effective are mechanisms for information sharing, referral, assessment and intervention? 3. Are there clear protocols in place to support the arrangements?
Performance and inspection processes are linked and outcome focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agencies will have a better understanding of each others performance and inspection framework ▪ Agencies will be encouraged to work together to achieve shared outcomes ▪ Young people's outcomes will be at the centre of service delivery 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do agencies hold each other to account for the services they provide? 2. How does each agency contribute to the performance framework for young people? 3. Are the needs of young people who offend appropriately included in LAAs?
The aims, objectives and responsibilities of all agencies are clearly delineated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioners, service users and their families have a better understanding of agency roles and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do the YOT and other agencies define their roles in areas of overlap (e.g.

	<p>responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service users will be empowered to access the services that they need ▪ Referrals between agencies and joint working will be facilitated ▪ Gaps and problems in services will be identified and resolved 	<p>prevention)?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. How does the YOT work with other agencies in respect of individual young people? 3. Are these arrangements written down and widely understood? 4. Is there duplication or gaps in service delivery? 5. What are the mechanisms for resolving difficulties between agencies? 6. How accessible are services for young people who offend or are at risk of offending?
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Appendix A: Detailed description of case study sites

Case study Site A (metropolitan borough)

The YOT

The YOT is located in children's services and since January 2007, has been line managed within the Children, Youth and Community section by an assistant director. This section includes youth services, Connexions, sports, early intervention and play. The YOT management board is part of the Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board (CYPPB).

Previous location

Immediately prior to the current arrangements, the YOT manager was line managed by the assistant director of the children's trust, who is responsible for strategy and commissioning in children's services. Before that, the YOT was managed in children's social services.

The YOT management board has been integrated into the CYPBB. The board changed its remit in 2007, as detailed in the children's partnership arrangements section below.

Planned location

There are no known plans to change the YOT's position within council structures.

Children's service structures

Children's partnership arrangements

In January 2007 the Children's Trust Board became the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, and its remit was extended from vulnerable children and young people to all children and young people.

Due to the change in administration in the borough, the lead member for children's services and chair of the CYPPB has changed.

Children's Services Authority

The DCS was appointed in early 2006, and the integrated Children's Services Authority was formed in April 2006. Children's services are structured in five divisions:

- Resources
- Schools Improvement
- Complex Needs
- Children
- Youth and Community (which includes the YOT)
- Commissioning, Performance and Partnership.

Links between YOT and children's structures

Operational links

The YOT manager attends the monthly children's services extended management team meeting, which provides links to operational managers. Operational YOT managers also attend joint management meetings with other children's service managers.

As well as having protocols with relevant services, the YOT is co-located with a service, which aims to prevent young people from becoming looked after. This service and the YOT work together to support families when young people are at risk of being looked-after.

The YOT has its own standalone information system, but staff have also been trained on ISCIS, the Integrated System for Children's Services. YOT staff have viewing access, but cannot input data. A YOT worker was seconded into the ISCIS change team to ensure there was wider knowledge of the YOT information system. It was envisaged that the YOT system would be linked to ISCIS in the future, enabling children's services records to include YOT information. Interviewees suggested that an unintended benefit of the joint training on ISCIS was that it brought YOT staff into contact with other children's service managers.

There have also been departmental days for children's service managers, including YOT management staff.

There are four schools' partnerships around which multi-disciplinary integrated teams were expected to be developed. However the arrangements for developing such teams, and the ways in which the YOT would be linked to them, were not clarified during the research period.

Strategic and management links

Since the YOT management board's integration into the CYPBB, the YOT has become a standing item on the board's agenda. The report presented by the YOT to this board is also presented to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). A 'briefing' meeting is held prior to the CYPBB between the YOT manager, the assistant director responsible for the YOT, and the two political chairs of the CYPBB and the CDRP.

The YOT manager has a meeting every six weeks with the assistant director for Complex Needs (the directorate which includes social care services, including looked-after children and child protection).

Change process and rationale for YOT's position within structures

Initial changes

The decision to discontinue the separate YOT management board was recommended by an external consultant. At the time of the first wave of research interviews in November 2005, the rationale for the location of the YOT was described as being linked to the perception of children who offend, or who are at risk of offending, as vulnerable children, and therefore under the remit of the children's trust. The YOT management board had experienced problems ensuring senior representation; integration with the children's trust board was seen as a way of overcoming this issue. It was also perceived as a mechanism for enabling connections and closer joint working between the YOT and children's services.

Recent changes

The change to the YOT's line management arrangement resulted from a review of the Children's Services Authority structure that followed the appointment of the children's services director. This move was announced in June 2006, and took place in January 2007. The rationale for this move was discussed in the summer 2006 interviews and again at the update interview with the YOT manager in February 2007. It was suggested that the YOT could have logically linked into three of the five directorates – Commissioning, Performance and Partnership (where it had previously been), Complex Needs or Children, Youth and Community – and that all three had expressed an interest in managing the YOT.

According to stakeholders, the rationale for the YOT moving to Children, Youth and Community was to locate it with other specialist youth services. It was hoped that this would strengthen operational links with the youth service and Connexions, resulting in more effective preventative work and improved access to other services for young people who offend. A second, more pragmatic, reason was also given for the YOT's location; that the portfolios of the other two assistant directors were already too large to also take on management of the YOT.

The need to maintain operational links with the Complex Needs directorate was emphasised by interviewees. In order to ensure that the profile of youth offending issues did not diminish within the authority, it was further recognised that the YOT would need to ensure that it had strong links to Commissioning, Performance and Partnership.

Case study Site B (County Council)

The YOT

Current location within council structures (spring 2007)

The Director of Special Needs and Community Support within the Children's Services Authority has managed the YOT since November 2005. This director is also responsible for social work, child health, educational psychology and special educational needs (SEN).

The YOT manager was historically seen as having a largely operational role, but this changed to incorporate some more strategic responsibilities with the departure of the Head of Crime Reduction, who was the former strategic lead.

The YOT has its own management board, which is chaired by the Chief Executive. This is described by stakeholders as being an effective governance arrangement, with strong representation and attendance.

Previous location

Prior to November 2005, the Head of Crime Reduction in the Chief Executive's Office managed the YOT.

Planned location

At the time of interviews in July 2006, a review of the structure of services for young people and the options for developing integrated youth services was taking place. This review focused on Connexions in particular, but the YOT, teenage pregnancy, the substance misuse service and the youth service were also considered. The YOT's operational manager was on the project team for the review, which was led by the chief

executive of Connexions. The review was due to be considered by the Children's Services Authority management team, and endorsed by the Families and Children's Trust (FACT) board and the council executive.

By the time of the update interview with the YOT in February 2007, it had been decided that Connexions would continue to be commissioned as a service, becoming part of an integrated youth services framework. The YOT was also expected to be managed within integrated youth services, and while precise arrangements had not been clarified at the time of the YOT interview in February 2007, it was clear that the YOT would no longer be directly managed within children's services. However, it was agreed that the YOT would be retained as a service (rather than being commissioned) and would continue to have its own management board. It was not expected that these changes would take place before autumn 2007. In the meantime, the transitional arrangements with the Director of Special Needs and Community Support would remain in place.

Children's service structures

Children's partnership arrangements

County B established a FACT in 2003 as a result of a local review into children's services. The FACT's remit includes all children and young people. There is a FACT board, which is entirely non-executive. Beneath this is a leadership team involving the senior managers from children's services and other partners. The FACT partnership builds on existing networks to create opportunities for keeping stakeholders informed and involved.

Children's Services Authority

The Children's Services Authority has been in place since 2005. As well as bringing together social services and education, it also includes some child health services. The DCS has been in post since November 2004. Functions are shared out between three directors.

Links between YOT and children's structures

Operational links

At the time of the summer 2006 interviews, authority B was in the process of planning integrated teams. Fourteen teams were to be established in the county, and at the time of the YOT update interview in February 2007, one team was up and running. It was expected that more local teams would begin in spring 2007, followed by the majority in autumn 2007. It was reported that YOT staff would not be divided up and split into each team, but that the YOT would be part of the integrated framework. It was suggested that the YISP would be the most likely area of service to link into the integrated teams. For the core YOT work, the possibility of having named link workers was being considered, and it was felt that an outpost model would not be feasible.

Joint working between the YOT and children's services is reported to take place, but it was acknowledged to lack consistency, being partially dependent upon individual relationships and specific protocols. The YOT is co-ordinating acceptable behaviour agreements within children's services.

The YOT was not directly involved in the CAF development, although there had been discussions about this in the project team for the integrated framework for youth services, of which the YOT manager was a member. The YOT and children's services

currently have separate information systems, although integrated information systems had been discussed.

Strategic and management links

There is a Leadership Management Team for children's services, to which the YOT is linked through the Director of Special Needs and Community Support, who manages the YOT. The YOT manager sits on the senior management group of the Special Needs and Community Support directorate. The DCS holds a monthly meeting with the heads of service in children's services, which is attended by the YOT manager.

The YOT is represented on the FACT board by the Director of Special Needs and Community Support; the YOT manager is not a member of this board. YOT staff have direct contact with FACT through the network of stakeholders; any member of YOT staff can be involved in the partnership through conferences, consultations and a regular newsletter.

The Director of Special Needs and Community Support attends the YOT management board; the DCS is not a member of this board.

Change process and rationale for YOT's position within council structures

Initial change

Authority B was one of the early demonstration sites for this research. Initial interviews were carried out in November 2005, when the YOT had recently moved to children's services. The rationale for the YOT move was described as being a combination of pragmatism, prompted by the departure of the head of crime reduction and the Council's decision not to replace this post, together with a belief that children's services was an appropriate location for the YOT. It was felt that bringing the YOT into children's services was logical, given that it is 'first and foremost a children's service'.

Planned changes

The decision to move the YOT from children's services to being managed within a commissioned integrated youth services framework had not been confirmed at the time of stakeholder interviews in summer 2006. It had, however, been confirmed by the time of the update interview with the YOT in February 2007, although the precise arrangements had not been clarified. The rationale supporting the decision had not been communicated to the research team.

Case study site C (unitary authority)

The YOT

Current location within council structures (spring 2007)

The YOT manager is a service director level post, entitled Director of Youth Offending Services. The YOT manager reports to the YOT management board, which is chaired by the chief executive. The current chief executive was recently appointed. The YOT is regarded as a 'free standing' organisation, at 'arms-length' from council structures.

The YOT management board has experienced a high turnover of members recently due to restructuring in partner agencies, retirements and staff turnover.

Previous location

The YOT's position has not changed since its inception.

Planned location

There do not appear to be any plans to move the YOT.

Children's service structures

Children's partnership arrangements

A Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) is in place. Interviewees in 2006 reported that it was not yet functioning as a board, but was discussing structures and principles. The YOT manager sits on both the Board itself and executive group of the board, which has the remit of driving forward the agenda.

There is a Children's Partnership Network beneath the board, which is a communication body, but does not have a decision-making remit. There are also various strategy groups underneath the strategic partnership board, focusing on particular groups of children (e.g. looked-after children) and operational processes.

Children's Services Authority

Integration of education and social services was described as being at an early stage at the time of interviews in June 2006. Since those interviews it transpires that the DCS has left and, following a poor JAR, plans were being implemented to introduce an 'external partner' to run children's services, with the support of DfES and the Regional Government Office, by April 2007. Meanwhile, interim managers and directors would be in post until the external partners brought in replacements.

Therefore there was a sense of instability and 'constant state of change' within children's services. It has been suggested that this limited the extent to which the children's agenda could currently be taken forward.

At the time of interviews in summer 2006, integrated teams were being considered around children's centres for younger children. One integrated local team was running for this age group, and the YOT was involved in a Vulnerable Families pilot. It was not expected that integrated processes would be implemented for some time.

Links between YOT and children's structures

Operational links

There is a CAF pilot underway and the YOT has been involved in the development of CAF locally. The YOT was planning to use CAF when it needed to make a referral to mainstream services; however, this would be in addition to current assessment processes. The YOT has reached an agreement that it will be able to view the children's services database, but the YOT's own database will remain separate. A protocol had been signed for information sharing with children's services in relation to the YISP programme. The YOT had access to the databases held by some other agencies: police, PCT and Connexions.

It was reported that there had been some pockets of joint working between the YOT and children's social care services, but that this was not consistent. Delivery level links were described as being through protocols.

The YOT had worked with schools on specific initiatives, for example with primary and secondary schools on a crime reduction in schools initiative.

Strategic and management links

The YOT manager sits on the CYPSP board. The YOT is involved in a number of the strategy groups beneath the strategic partnership. The YOT manager also attends the Children's Fund management committee. At the time of the interviews, these links were described as being predominantly at the strategic level, while delivery level links were through protocols.

In summer 2006, the YOT was not part of the small executive group of the CYPSP. Connexions had attended this group, 'representing' teenagers. However, the YOT manager now sits on the group.

The YOT felt it had been heavily involved in the Children and Young People's Plan, through the YOT manager's presence on the CYPSP and subsequent involvement in the relevant working group for the plan.

The DCS sits on the YOT management board.

At the time of interviews in summer 2006, there were plans for the YOT manager to start attending the six-weekly management meetings in children's services.

Links were being set up between other children's service and community safety structures; for example the police have a place on the CYPSP, as recommended by the YOT. It was also felt that links between Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and the Safeguarding Board would be helpful, and a representative from MAPPA had recently been given a place on the Safeguarding Board.

Change process and rationale for YOT's location within council structures

The YOT has not changed position since its inception. The YOT has been a 'freestanding' organisation at arm's length from the council since it was set up. This model was established in order to demonstrate a change from the previous youth justice team, and to ensure the YOT had the capacity to influence both children's and community safety partners.

It was suggested that this rationale remained relevant in the current policy climate of integrated children's services. At the time of research interviews, it did not appear that there had been any re-opening of discussions about the position of the YOT. However, the YOT's 'freestanding' position was subsequently reviewed by the YOT management board and re-affirmed in a position statement.

Case study site D (unitary authority)

The YOT

Current location within council structures (spring 2007)

The YOT currently sits in Adult and Housing Services. This is a new department, which brings together the previous Adult and Community Services and Housing departments. The YOT has been part of Adult and Community Services since April 2006, being located within a new Community Safety Division alongside the DAAT, Community Safety Team, Adult Learning Services and community centres. The YOT manager is line managed by the Service Director for Community Safety.

The YOT has its own management board, which is now chaired by the ACO Probation. Recently the strategic arrangements for the council's community safety were reviewed,

and the possibility of merging the YOT management board, CDRP and DAAT was considered. This has since been discounted; the YOT will retain its own management board arrangements, whilst the DAAT and CDRP will merge.

Previous location

Originally, the YOT was based in Social Care and Health, with the YOT manager managed by the Director of Social Services. This arrangement was described as being 'hosted' by social services, rather than 'buried' within the department. The YOT appears to have been relatively autonomous in this arrangement. Prior to April 2006, the management board was chaired by the Director of Social Services.

Planned location

There are no current plans to move the YOT.

Children's service structures

Children's partnership arrangements

The strategic partnership for integrated services for children is the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), which has evolved from a strategic partnership known as the [authority D] Federation (Children's Trust). This drives the Children and Young People's Plan, the joint commissioning strategy and change agenda for integrating children's services.

Children's Services Authority

The DCS came into post in early 2006, providing a transitional period to set up arrangements prior to the Children's Services Authority formally coming into being in April 2006.

There is a Targeted Integrated Support Pilot (TISP) in one area of the city. This is piloting integrated approaches to service delivery for 0–19-year-olds (extended from pre-13s). It has recently been agreed that the YISP will be located with the new TISP delivery group for 8–13-year-olds.

Integrated working was in the process of being discussed and developed in a range of areas, including joint commissioning, common assessment framework, information sharing and workforce development strategy.

Links between YOT and children's structures

Operational links

There is no shared IT system. However, there is a protocol whereby some members of the YOT team have viewing access to the children's services IT system. The YOT has been involved in the development process for CAF, but they are not using it. Junior YIPs are piloting CAF and *Onset* to see how these can be aligned.

There is joint working with other services around some young people, particularly relating to looked-after children, education and safeguarding. New working arrangements are being delivered to support joint areas of concern, such as education, training and employment. The protocol around key worker responsibility had recently been strengthened

YOT staff attend a number of working groups for the CYPSP. The YOT is also reported to have been heavily involved in the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) process.

The YOT has been involved in joint working in the TISP pilot, through the Junior Youth Inclusion Programme (JYIP) preventative programmes, and has also committed strategic and practitioner level staff resources to the remodelling and change teams.

Strategic and management links

The Children's Services Authority is represented on the YOT management board by the Head of Children's Fieldwork Services and the Service Director for Inclusion and Partnerships. The DCS is not a member.

The YOT manager is a member of the CYPSP, and the YOT is represented on the Joint Commissioning Group. There have been presentations and agenda items focusing specifically on youth offending at the then [Authority D] Federation (now CYPSP).

The YOT reported having contributed to the Children and Young People's Plan, through involvement with the work streams relating to each of the five ECM outcomes. This was enabled through the YOT manager being on the then [Authority D] Federation board (now CYPSP), and YOT staff attending various meetings in relation to the plan.

At the time of interviews in summer 2006, the Director of Adult and Community Services and the DCS met periodically to ensure a corporate level link. However, the Director of Adult and Community Services has since left the authority.

The YOT manager attends the children's services directorate on a six-weekly cycle to raise joint issues; a similar arrangement now exists for the YOT Deputy Head of Service to attend the children's management team.

The YOT has some accountability to the CSA, despite not being line managed within the directorate, as the DCS signs off the Youth Justice Plan.

At the time of the update interviews in spring 2007 there were plans to develop further links between children's services and community safety partners. The DCS hoped to sit on the CDRP strategic level board.

Change process and rationale for YOT's location within council structures

Initial move

The YOT's move from social services to Adult and Community Services was decided during a review of council structures for crime and disorder in response to an Audit Commission inspection report, which criticised the corporate approach to community safety. During the review, the YOT presented the case for location within children's services, and lobbied the decision-makers. However, the YOT was seen as one of the relevant services for a new directorate to drive forward the crime and disorder agenda. Furthermore, parallels were drawn between the YOT and the DAAT (which was also moving from social services to Adult and Community Services), for example they both have distinct work streams with their own performance targets.

Stakeholders described the rationale for locating the YOT with Adult and Community Services as being a combination of pragmatism and the perceived need to create a single, high profile department to focus on crime and disorder issues.

Recent move

At the time when Adult and Community Services and Housing merged to create one large department, the possibility of the Community Safety Division (which now included the YOT) moving to an alternative department, such as Regeneration and

Culture, was considered. This idea was rejected. The debate as to whether YOT would be better located in children's services was not re-opened, possibly due to the already large size of the children's services authority and a continued view that it was necessary to implement the Audit Commission recommendations about improving the cohesion of community safety.

Case study Site E (county council)

The YOT

Current location within council structures (spring 2007)

The YOT manager is currently line managed within one of the directorates in the children's service authority. This directorate is managed by the Service Director for Children and Young People, and also includes children in social care, the youth service and Special Educational Needs.

The YOT has retained a separate strategic management board within the county council. This decision was reinforced by a strategic review, which endorsed retaining a management board, chaired by the chief executive and holding high level meetings twice a year, and an executive group which meets quarterly for more detailed discussions around performance. A representative from Connexions chairs the executive group.

The chief executive, who was chair of the YOT management board, has recently changed. As an interim arrangement, the service director who manages the YOT took on this role. However the recently appointed new chief executive is not intending to chair the board and it has further been suggested that the board structure should be reviewed. The chief executive's role as a chair was viewed as an important means of ensuring a cross-cutting ownership of the YOT with children's services and community safety.

Previous location

The YOT moved to its current position within children's services in December 2005. It had previously been managed within a solely strategic directorate within the Children's Services Authority. Prior to that, the YOT was managed from the chief executive's office.

Planned location

In April 2007, the YOT was expected to transfer to Adolescent Services, alongside the youth service, Connexions, participation, outdoor education and the Teenage Pregnancy Unit. While the Head of Adolescent Services would line manage the YOT manager, they would not chair the management board.

Children's service structures

Children's partnership arrangements

The County Council has a Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) and there are also 11 CYPSPs at the district level. The county CYPSP has a board and stakeholder group.

Children's Services Authority

At the time of interviews in July 2006, children's services were described as being in a 'state of flux'. A major structural review was being undertaken in the council, including

children's services, and significant structural changes were expected. A new DCS took up their post in January 2007 and it is expected that the period of instability will continue in the near future, during a restructure of children's services designed to re-focus services towards early intervention and implement efficiency savings.

There is a pathfinder children's trust model at the operational level in district P, which links into the P district's CYPSP. However, this locally specific children's trust model would be ceasing to function in April 2007, to be succeeded by a countywide approach to integrated teams around the school community and child (TASCCs). These teams integrate the schools service and children and young people's service into local teams for early intervention. They are also expected to cover preventative work in the future. While they are not multi-agency, and will not immediately include health or police (unlike the district P model), they will be multi-disciplinary teams comprising education, social work and other early intervention staff.

Links between YOT and children's structures

Operational links

For a brief period, splitting the YOT into the 29 local TASCCs was under consideration. However, it was made clear that the YOT needed to retain certain aspects of its structure. As TASCCs have an early intervention focus, it was not expected that CAF or the integrated teams would link to the core activity of YOT. The links to TASCCs would be through YISP.

The February 2007 update interviews revealed the YOT to be formally aligned with TASCCs through 12 YISP workers. These workers are currently based out of the YOT in offices and in the community and are line managed through YOT, but it is intended that they will work very closely with TASCCs. A range of multi-agency meetings are taking place, which the YISP links in to. Exact details of the arrangements had not been decided, such as whether the teams would be virtual or co-located, but it was indicated that these links were a consolidation of the way YISP is already working.

It is expected that young people referred into YISP will be at the 'top end' of the early intervention spectrum. There is a referral route for local services into YISP that mirrors CAF and will use the CAF form once CAF rolls out. The YISP worker then completes *Onset* as part of their process.

The close working between YISP and TASCCs was felt to be logical. However, it would be important that YISP workers were able to identify and focus on young people at risk of offending, as opposed to those who were at risk in other ways.

The manager of YOT E was seconded to district P children's trust for a year in 2005. A YOT worker was initially seconded into the Children's Trust for a short while. The YOT and children's trust meet at the Prevent and Deter Forum, and there is a police officer involved in the trust, who also works closely with the YOT. Otherwise, at the time of interviews, there was little interface between district P children's trust and the YOT.

As district P children's trust has an early intervention focus, Final Warnings provided the only opportunity for joint working, as once young people were more involved in the youth justice system they no longer met the trust's eligibility criteria.

Across county E, joint working with children's services appears variable, with some examples of good practice described, but also reported tensions when young people in

contact with the YOT experience difficulty meeting criteria to receive other services. YISP was seen as the key area for future joint working.

The YOT was involved in a working group looking at the shared information system.

The YOT was not expected to be part of the shared database, but possible interfaces between the YOT IT systems and the shared system were being explored.

Strategic and management links

The YOT is represented on the multi-agency stakeholder group of the countywide CYPSP. It is not directly represented on the board, but the line manager to the YOT provides this link.

The YOT manager attends management meetings within the Children's Services Authority.

The YOT area team managers link into the 11 district CYPSPs, although the extent of their involvement varies according to how many districts are within each team manager's area, and their other time commitments.

Change process and rationale for YOT's location within council structures

Initial change

The decision to locate the YOT within a service directorate within children's services was based on the rationale that the YOT was a service for children and therefore should be managed alongside other children's services. It was reported that a community safety partner had challenged this rationale on the basis that the YOT was also about public safety and not just about prevention. Interviewees suggested that the decision had not been fully debated and the assumption that the YOT should be located in children's services prevailed.

Interviewees reported that the location could help build understanding around prevention of youth offending, and strengthen existing links with services for children and young people, such as leaving and aftercare services, community social work and secure accommodation.

Planned change

The decision to move the YOT to a new Adolescent Services Department within the Children's Services Authority, was reported as being based on the fact that YOT clients were the same age as those of other adolescent services. It was felt that there was expertise in this directorate in working with teenagers, which the YOT could both contribute to and benefit from.

Case study site F (cross-authority YOT)

The YOT

Current location within council structures (spring 2007)

YOT F covers a large county council, local authority (LA) 1 and three unitary authorities LA2, LA3 and LA4. This situation means the YOT is necessarily relatively 'freestanding' as an organisation.

The YOT manager is line managed within LA1. The line management arrangement had recently changed from the chief executive to the Deputy Director of Children's Services.

The YOT has a management board for the whole of area F, covering all four local authorities. At the time of interviews in summer 2006, this was in the process of changing to a two-tier structure of management boards. Local YOT steering groups have been set up within each local authority; these new structures discuss local issues and the YOT presents local performance information. The purpose of these local structures is to enable greater engagement with the children's trust arrangements in each local authority, and linkages are being developed. Funding has not been devolved to this level, although there is a nominal budget apportioned to each authority.

The F-wide management board has historically been the governance structure for the YOT. With the development of a two-tier structure, its membership has been slimmed down, so there is now one children's services representative from each local authority instead of two. It is intended that the local steering groups will report to this board to ensure that full accountability across area F is maintained.

The chief executive of LA1 chairs the area F-wide management board, but at the time of writing this was about to change; the plan was for the DCS from each of the four local authorities to chair the board on a rotational basis in the future.

Previous location

The YOT has been a 'freestanding' organisation, managed within LA1 and governed by an area F-wide management board since its inception. Its core model has not changed, although as described above, there have been amendments to improve local accountability. The line management has also recently changed.

Planned location

There are no plans to change the current area F-wide YOT model.

Children's service structures

Children's partnership arrangements

The arrangements for children's partnerships in the four authorities in area F were at different stages of development at the time of interviews in summer 2006. In each area there is a relatively complex set of arrangements. Common across the four sets of arrangements appears to be:

- a wide partnership group chaired by an executive member
- a strategic level board or senior executive group
- a commissioning body in some form (which appeared to be in very early stages)
- various sub-groups.

LA1: The CYPP management board was relatively new at the time of interviews in summer 2006. This is a senior officers group, chaired by the DCS. There is also a broader group, the Children's Conference, which meets twice a year. LA1 was a pathfinder children's trust, a commissioning trust focusing on CAMHS.

LA2: There is a children's trust board. Although strategic arrangements had been put in place, it was stated in summer 2006 interviews that the children's trust would not

formally come into existence until October 2006. At the time of interviews there was a strategic board, a process board and an implementation board; however there were plans to change this to a governance board and an executive group. Plans to develop the partnership arrangements further were on hold until the new DCS was in post (in autumn 2006). Since the interviews, the new DCS has started and the board is under review.

LA3: LA3 was a pathfinder children's trust, set up in 2003. There is a CYPSP executive and a joint commissioning group. The latter has been key to driving forward the CYPP. The CYPSP executive had been in place approximately 18 months by the time of interviews, and was considered relatively well established.

LA4: There is a CYPSP executive group. At the time of interviews in summer 2006, it was indicated that this was in the relatively early stages of development. Stakeholders reported that membership was going to be reconfigured following an Audit Commission assessment of their partnership structures.

Children's Services Authority

LA1: The DCS came into post in 2005. At the time of interviews, the new children's services management structure had very recently been put in place and announced to staff. The process of appointing staff to the deputy posts was planned for the coming months.

LA2: The CSA had been in place since 2004. The DCS left LA2 in December 2005, and a new director was appointed to begin in November 2006. An interim DCS was in place at the time of interviews in summer 2006. Plans for further integrating services had been postponed in the interim period.

LA3: The DCS came into post in April 2005, and the CSA was formally launched in September 2006.

LA4: The DCS came into post in August 2005. Interviewees reported that the four children's services functions had worked closely since then through a management team. The extent to which structures would change to become more integrated was not clear at the time of the interviews.

Links between YOT and children's structures

Operational links

Integrated teams are not in place in any of the local authorities in area F. In LA1, where teams are in the planning stage, it has been agreed that YOT staff will not be co-located but will form part of each team's broader network. The reason for not co-locating staff related to the statutory nature of YOT casework and the consequent need to keep staff boundaries flexible so that caseloads can be managed. It was indicated that this approach would also need to be taken in the other local authorities.

Joint processes are not yet in place, but it was reported that the YOT was involved in negotiations.

Strategic and management links

The YOT is represented on the senior executive group of the children's trust arrangements in each local authority. In LA4 this is a recent development, as previously the YOT manager linked to a young people's partnership below a youth board. The local YOT area managers link to the joint commissioning groups.

In all areas except LA2, the YOT local steering group is formally linked into the strategic partnership. For example, in LAs 1 and 3 the steering group is one of the outcomes groups of the strategic partnership. In LA4 the steering group reports to the youth board, which in turn reports to the executive group.

The YOT links into the 11 district partnerships for children in LA1 through attendance at common groups; the CDRPs (all districts) and the LA1 CYP board (two districts). However the YOT identified the need to further develop links at this level.

The area F-wide YOT management board is attended by one children's service representative from each local authority. Previously separate social care and education representatives from each council attended. Additional children's services representatives sit on the local steering groups for the YOT.

The YOT is not directly involved in management arrangements within children's services, for example the manager does not attend senior management meetings. However, the YOT manager met individually with the DCS in each local authority to discuss the YOT's role in emerging structures and this has developed into a pattern of regular meetings.

Change process and rationale for YOT's location within council structures

With the arrival of a new YOT manager at a time of the integrated children's services agenda, there was a review by the YOT and four local authorities as to whether the YOT should remain as an area F-wide model. At the time, key disadvantages to the specific model were felt to be:

- lack of ownership from constituent local authorities of the YOT, and consequent low levels of funding for the YOT
- local authorities found that effective YOT accountability for local performance was lacking as information was presented at area F-level, which covers diverse local areas with different challenges and needs
- linking in to the large number of structures that were being set up as part of the integrated children's services agenda was likely to stretch YOT resources.

Nevertheless, it was decided that YOT F would not be disaggregated. The rationale for this decision was based on weighing up the aforementioned disadvantages against the following perceived advantages of the model:

- economies of scale in central functions such as performance information
- opportunities for cross-authority learning
- young people's lives cross the local government boundaries
- ensures youth justice is a high profile issue and the YOT not simply a small part of a large CSA.

However, some structural changes were made in order to increase ownership by local authorities and improve the accountability and responsiveness of YOT at local level:

- four local authority management steering groups were set up to feed into the overall management board

- YOT F performance management information was disaggregated for each local authority.

It was also felt important to continue to have specific area managers as a point of contact for each local authority.

Appendix B: Young people's and parents' views on services for vulnerable young people and young people who offend (focus group findings)

Introduction

This appendix presents the findings from focus groups involving young people and parents in the six case study sites. The focus groups explored integrated working and perceptions of services and support available to young people who offend and vulnerable young people at risk of offending. The findings from the groups are not representative of young people and parents more generally; this paper reflects the views of those who took part in the focus groups.

The focus groups

Eleven focus groups took place between October 2006 and January 2007. Interactive methods were used to gather participants' views about current service provision and broader issues relating to integrated working. The intention was to focus on participants' views and opinions, rather than their personal experiences. Vignettes about young people with various needs, including young people who were offending, and a series of statements about integrated working were used to stimulate discussion within the groups.

Young people

Six groups were held with 32 young people, one group in each case study site. Overall we aimed to gather the views of young people across the spectrum of offending behaviour and involvement with the YOT. However, as far as possible we ensured that the young people within each group were of similar age and had similar levels of involvement in the youth justice system. Thus three groups involved young people taking part in preventative activities:

- Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP)
- Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP)
- Junior Youth Inclusion Programme (JYIP).

The other three groups involved young people on community orders: referral orders, ISSP and a group of young people from various orders. Some young people had experience of custody.

The age of young people ranged from nine to 18 years old, as detailed in Table 1 below. Around two-thirds of participants were male (22), 81% (26) were from a White ethnic background and the others described themselves as Black, Mixed heritage and Middle Eastern.

Table 1: Age of young people who attended focus groups

Age (years)	Total	%
9 to 10	3	9%

11 to 12	5	16%
13 to 14	5	16%
15 to 16	12	38%
17 to 18	7	22%
Total	32	100%

Parents

Focus groups were held with parents in five of the six case study sites; it did not prove possible to arrange a group in YOT E. Some parents were accessed through YOT parenting programmes, and included those on Parenting Orders. Others were recruited directly by YOT staff who contacted parents whose children were involved in the YOT. In one area, parents were accessed through a broader parenting initiative, which was attended by range of parents including those whose children had not offended.

Twenty-six parents took part in the groups, with group sizes ranging from two to seven. Between them participants had 84 children, aged from one to 29 years old. The vast majority of participants were female, with just two being male. Eighty-one per cent described their ethnic background as White.

'What makes a good worker?'

Characteristics of workers

Focus group participants discussed the characteristics that determine whether professionals are good or bad at working with young people. Young people identified the following characteristics of a good worker:

- friendly and kind (but not overly-friendly or too personal)
- talk to young people in the same way they would to adults
- non-judgemental
- does not treat their work like 'just a job', and is there because they want to help young people
- reliable; keeps in contact, keeps to appointments
- helpful; acts on what they are told, responds quickly
- listens to young people and takes their concerns into consideration
- has had similar life experiences to young people, therefore more understanding
- respectful, has a good attitude and not arrogant
- makes some giving gestures: travel passes, money, cigarettes, snacks.

Parents shared most of the young people's views about what constituted a good worker. For example, they agreed that being respectful and caring about young people, rather than simply seeing them 'as a job', is important. Parents highlighted the need for those who work with young people to be someone that young people can relate to, and therefore feel able to talk to. They also felt it was important that workers were able to motivate and encourage young people whilst still being able to put themselves at the

‘same level’ as young people, for example by joking with them. Parents also suggested that having workers from similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds to young people could be beneficial.

Differential treatment of young people who offend

Two key themes arose when young people discussed the responses of workers on discovering that they had offended. On the one hand this knowledge could have a negative effect on the way young people were treated by workers, but on the other hand it was perceived to increase the amount of support available. These themes also permeated discussions around information sharing and access to services.

Young people felt that many workers judge and label young people once they are known to have offended. This was reported to vary between individuals and agencies.

Participants felt that some workers treated all young people the same, regardless of their behaviour, including Connexions staff, youth workers and YOT workers (although they also noted that there was no point of comparison for YOT workers, who wouldn’t see them if they were not offenders). However, education professionals were commonly cited as treating young people differently once they knew they had offended. The older age group also cited employers. Young people described how certain staff could start to appear wary of them, stop trusting them and keep a closer watch over them. For example, two young people reported that since their school was informed that they had been given referral orders, they have been watched more carefully and ‘get the blame for everything’, even when they are not doing anything wrong. Others described similar experiences, including being expelled from school for an act they had not committed. One group also felt that the public stereotyped young people on the streets as being troublesome without having any knowledge about their offending.

One group reported a positive implication of the changed attitude of workers once they were aware of young people’s offending. A group of older young people, with relatively more offending history, felt that workers would allow them more leeway in their conduct and would be more likely to overlook minor behavioural issues, whereas they would ‘expect better’ from non-offenders.

Young people identified a key change that occurs when they are known to have offended, or displayed difficult behaviour – they are offered more support. This is discussed later in this report.

Parents also expressed the concern voiced by young people that young people can be labelled once they have been in trouble, and are therefore at risk of being blamed for incidents in which they were not involved. Like the young people, they did not feel that all workers labelled young people and that there were good individuals across all services. However, police and teachers were perceived as being most likely to label and blame young people. Parents felt that they were also labelled when their children were in trouble, and some additionally felt unfairly blamed for the actions of their children.

Integrated working

Given that integrated working was not fully implemented in any of the case study sites, the focus groups with service users could not directly address participants’ experiences of such processes. Instead, some of the key concepts of integrated working were introduced, in order to explore the perspectives of young people who offend, those at risk of offending and parents of young people who offend. Statements about integrated

working were used to stimulate discussion. This section is divided into several inter-related elements of integrated working.

Information sharing

Most young people felt strongly that personal information held on file about them should not be shared freely with workers in other services. This view was expressed by young people with different offending histories and across the age range.

However, views on this issue were less consistent in the two focus groups with younger participants who were accessing preventative programmes (Junior YIP and YISP). When these groups discussed whether personal information, including behavioural issues, could be shared with workers such as schools, a small number felt they would not mind. However, others expressed mixed views; while it was recognised that information sharing could help people to support them, they also expressed concerns that it could result in teachers developing a negative attitude towards them.

The main reason given by young people for not wanting information from their file to be shared was that it is essentially private and personal. Young people did not like the thought of others knowing everything about their life and wanted to have some choice about what is revealed to individual workers.

You might like the worker you've got. You might not mind them knowing, but someone else, it's a different situation isn't it?

Concerns were raised by some older young people, who were more heavily involved in the youth justice system, that sharing information about offending could result in them being judged, labelled or stereotyped by other workers. One young person pointed out that it was unfair to be judged on previous behaviour if they have subsequently changed:

You could be bad, you could have done something that you wouldn't do now, back then. And I don't think people should know about that if you're not like that then.

It was felt that information could be disclosed to another service if the young person was asked first and had given their consent. The type of information and the services involved, affected whether information sharing was felt to be acceptable. For example, it was feared that passing on information about criminal behaviour to a potential employer would hinder their chances of getting a job. Younger people felt that information about smoking or offending should be kept private from school. Similarly, a young person attending JYIP felt it would be embarrassing if their school performance was discussed with JYIP workers.

However, it was recognised that it could be helpful for certain pieces of information to be passed to another agency if this would help them provide appropriate support. It was also recognised that this would cut down on the amount of questions that different workers needed to ask. A small number of participants identified child abuse as a special case, in which information should automatically be passed on.

Parents' views were similar to those of young people in that they felt that there should be some restrictions placed on information sharing depending on the type of information and particular agencies involved. However there was a far stronger recognition of the value of sharing information, in particular providing workers with a 'better picture' or the 'full story' of the young person, thus increasing their understanding of their problems and life history, and enabling more appropriate help to be provided.

It helps people that are trying to help your child understand where he's coming from, what his life's been like, what he's had to go through from a young age, because a lot of kids have got problems from when they're a young child, and there's nothing you can do to help them. But if people actually look at the child's life they can understand the child more and they know what they are dealing with.

If you've got the full picture, you've got more opportunity to do something about it.

It was also suggested that better communication could reduce the risk of young people falling between services and hence failing to receive support. In one group it was suggested that information on young people should be collected and held in one central place, enabling information to be shared between agencies at the earliest possible stage in order to prevent problems escalating.

Parents were happier for some agencies to have access to shared information than others. It was felt information should be shared with those who are trying to help the young people such as social services, education and the YOT, although parents stipulated that only a designated worker within each service should have access to a young person's file. Parents were suspicious about how the police might use such information and they also felt that if information was shared with employers it could hinder a young person's employment chances. Parents also suggested that counsellors should be able to offer complete confidentiality to young people unless self-harm was an issue, in which case it was hoped that other professionals would be brought in to help.

Joint working between agencies

The focus groups did not explore young people's perceptions of whether services currently worked together. Instead, the groups considered whether this should take place. Joint working between practitioners from different services was generally perceived as being a good idea by young people as it was felt that it could help workers to be more understanding and identify help. It was felt that such an approach could lead to a more timely and appropriate response, that 'things would get sorted out properly'. For example, one young person felt that a meeting between different workers to discuss their problems would have led to teachers being more understanding:

They suspended me, expelled me from school and you just go to crime from there... They need more understanding, even though they are thinking 'oh I don't have to put up with it, I'm only here to teach, ra, ra, ra'. But they should have a different aspect of it.

Although they appreciated how it could help, some young people disliked the thought of a group of people meeting to discuss their 'business', although others thought that they would only mind if they actually knew it was happening.

Participant 1: *I suppose people do talk together about you to make things better, yeah, but it's just when we think of things, like people are sat there talking about us, they might get on our nerves.*

Participant 2: *If we didn't know that they were talking about us then we wouldn't be bothered.*

Aside from concerns about information sharing already described, parents strongly supported the concept of joint working and felt that this could greatly improve current services. One parent described her experience of case conferences, which she felt had been very useful for her son:

All the people were involved with my son when we were trying to get him back into school – social services, education welfare, my support worker etc. We all had meetings together, I think it was every three months, we all got together and had meetings, we all said what was going on, it was all openly discussed in front of my son as well which was a really big help.

Another parent had been involved in a panel arranged by the YOT and found it helpful, particularly the fact that all the action points were recorded, ensuring that different agencies had to act upon what they had agreed to do. Another parent agreed this was a 'brilliant idea' as, in the absence of joint working, they had experienced delays and lack of co-ordination.

Assessments

Young people reported being asked lots of questions by different services. This was described as annoying; some did not like having to tell people their private problems. However, as reported earlier, this did not necessarily mean that they wanted information to be routinely shared between services.

Parents agreed that young people were asked too many questions and noted that this was exacerbated by high staff turnover. Having a single key worker was suggested as a solution; this is discussed further in the section below.

Lead professionals

The idea of lead professionals was discussed within the young people's groups, although it was not explored fully by all groups. A group of older young people with high levels of offending behaviour was unconvinced on the grounds that the young person may not get on with that particular individual. However, another group of young people with a similar profile thought it was a good idea, as it could mean 'good bonding with one, because if you have too many people, it'd do your head in, won't it?' In the discussion that followed, group participants described the good relationships they had with their helpful YOT workers; their views may have been influenced by these positive experiences.

Parents supported the concept of a lead professional. They felt that at present, young people had too many different workers and that turnover of staff was a problem. This meant that young people had to repeatedly answer the same questions, and in some cases resulted in them becoming alienated from services. In addition to reducing the amount of questioning, it was felt that a single key worker could facilitate a steady and trusting relationship with the young person, thereby communicating that they were cared for, which, it was felt, could increase their engagement with services.

A lot of the time they don't have the same people, so that the child, or that individual is constantly telling his story over and over again. All right they have a file, and they put a brief on that file, but you've got to remember that child is sitting there and having to see different people all the time, that is very difficult for the child..if that child were to see the same person all the time, I think it would be a lot easier.

However, it was noted that such workers would require sufficient resources to be able to act on the needs identified. Parents also felt that if a young person did not get on with their key worker, they should have the option of changing them.

Co-location of services

This issue was raised by young people themselves through discussions about joint working and improvements that could be made to services. One group suggested that co-locating services in school, primarily Connexions, but also substance misuse services – could be a beneficial way of bringing services together to sort out young people’s problems. A young person in this group suggested that a specific centre dedicated to helping young people in a range of different ways would be a big improvement on the way that support is currently provided:

YP 1: ...a big place where all the young kids go who need help or whatever, they could go and talk about their problems, and they could do a job for the place to keep them...

YP 2: Occupied.

YP1: Occupied, and earn some money.

Meeting the needs of vulnerable young people and young people who offend

Individual character and motivation

Young people saw individual motivation and character as the primary factor determining the resolution or deterioration of a young person’s problems. This view was evident across the age groups and offending behaviours, and was a cross-cutting theme throughout the young people’s discussions. Having a desire to change the way their life is going, and making a positive decision to change, were seen as crucial in determining whether a young person would seek help for their problems.

Participants pointed out that young people could be too scared or embarrassed to tell people about their problems, and seek help. It was therefore suggested that workers in services such as Connexions or the YOT, and personal support networks such as parents and boyfriends/girlfriends, had an important role to play in encouraging and supporting young people to change.

Parents also believed that individual motivation was key to change. They felt that an important step was when a young person recognised their problems and became aware of ‘right and wrong’. Parents felt that young people also need to be prepared to make an effort to change. Having a strong character, which could withstand other influences, was also seen as beneficial:

They’ve got to want to stop the drinking, the drugs and the only way they’re going to do it, it goes back to being down to him. Now a parent can try and guide their child, but at the end of the day, it’s down to the child to say, ‘yeah I need help’.

(Parent)

Parents identified young people’s difficulty talking about problems, failure to recognise that they had a problem or lack of readiness or motivation to change as being significant barriers to the resolution of their problems.

The role of personal networks

Personal networks were frequently cited as an important form of support for young people at risk, and those who were offending. Parents in particular were seen as a key source of help, as well as extended family members, girlfriends/boyfriends and other friends.

However, it was also recognised that these networks could provide negative as well as positive influences. Friends and peers more generally were frequently cited in this respect. For example, in one group, young people described the pressure on their estate to build a reputation by committing crime. When discussing fictional vignettes, participants suggested that young people needed to change their friends if they were to stop behaviour such as smoking and crime. Peer pressure was also seen as a potential barrier to seeking help. However, the potentially positive influence of peers was also recognised, for example, by an older group when they were discussing a hypothetical young man going to college.

Equally families were seen as sometimes less than supportive or helpful. For example, when discussing scenarios about parents who had issues with alcohol and domestic violence, young people felt that this could be detrimental for the child, suggesting that an appropriate response could be for the young person to go into care, for the violent parent to be punished and for various services to be provided to family members.

Parents’ views largely corresponded with those of young people. It was a widely felt that a young person’s friends could prevent them changing for the better.

Parents were able to provide insight into how they viewed their role. Generally they felt they had an important role to play in guiding and supporting their children, even though they did not always feel they had control over their behaviour and sometimes felt that they were blamed for the actions of their children. Parents felt that they sometimes needed support and information themselves in order to help their children. They also thought that it could be beneficial if parents got involved in activities such as youth clubs, for example by working alongside youth workers.

Awareness of service provision

One of the activities in the focus groups involved discussing what services might be able to help young people who were displaying multiple problems or were offending. Vignettes of fictional young people with a range of family, behavioural, substance misuse, education and financial problems were presented to stimulate discussion. It emerged that young people were able to identify a number of services that could help vulnerable young people or those who were offending. These included both statutory agencies and non-statutory services, and are summarised in the table below. However, although young people were able to suggest services that could potentially help young people, they also felt ill informed about what services were actually available to them locally.

Service	How service can help
Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preventing reoffending by talking to young person about their crime and its implications

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refer young person to social worker or youth service
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide education ▪ Address personal problems such as bullying
Educational support (e.g. extra classes, mentors, 1-1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide additional learning support
YOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide general help with problems ▪ Provide specific support, including anger management and for substance misuse (including alcohol). ▪ Help build young person's confidence
NSPCC and Childline (younger age groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support around personal problems including abuse and bullying
Social services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Address family problems, including domestic violence, abuse and parental alcoholism ▪ Take children into care ▪ Help with housing for older young people
Connexions (older age groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Find work ▪ Build confidence ▪ Provide advice on financial issues
Doctors, psychiatrists and nurses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Address substance misuse ▪ Treat depression ▪ Cure bed-wetting
Sport and recreation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helps to alleviate boredom ▪ Meaningfully occupies time ▪ Keeps young people off the streets
Fun activities – trips, outdoor activities, clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alleviates boredom ▪ Meaningfully occupies time ▪ Off the streets
Substance misuse services (including FRANK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advice and support around drug use, smoking and alcohol
Anger management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deal with anger issues
Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build confidence and self-esteem ▪ Address substance misuse

Parents generally identified the same range of services as young people, although they placed greater emphasis on the need for counselling as a way of tackling underlying issues affecting young people's behaviour and also included parenting support as a potentially helpful resource. However, parents also felt that neither they nor young people knew enough about what help was available or how it could be accessed; more advertising and information about services should be made available.

Views on current service provision

Accessibility

Young people felt that more help was available to young people once they had offended or were displaying problem behaviour. Such support was likely to be provided by social workers, youth workers or the YOT. Some focus group participants on preventative programmes were aware of positive opportunities provided:

... like my sister, she's bad, but she gets to go places with her social worker, and like ...good people don't go anywhere.

Tell the social worker that [young male in scenario is] getting into trouble on the streets and they could take him out places he likes and stuff.

It was further suggested that starting to offend could be beneficial for a vulnerable young person because they would be more likely to receive help with their personal problems. Some older young people, who had a high level of involvement with the youth justice system, suggested that being identified as an offender could do a young person with problems 'a favour':

YP 1: ...because if he aint got no help, and he aint got no-one to turn to and he ends up doing a bit of crime, that could stop him in his tracks there and then after doing that one bit of crime. Getting that ... referral order, that could sort him out.

YP 2: ... you have to tell them why, because with referral [order], you've got to tell them how you feel and what's going on and why you was doing it... and how you felt and all that, and you're obviously explaining your situation and they could try helping then.

Parents expressed great frustration at frequently being unable to find or receive help for their children until it was 'too late' and the problems had become very serious. Being refused help because their child's problem did not meet the threshold for the service was common; one parent recounted calling social services about a violent incident and being told, 'sorry... we don't need to get involved yet'. However, if a young person offended and became involved in the youth justice system, then help was more likely to be forthcoming.

Some parents suggested that there was more support available for younger children through health visitors or services such as SureStart, but once the child went to school this was perceived to diminish.

The emotion of parents in relation to this topic was evident in the language used, for example describing having to be close to 'nervous breakdown' to get help, 'losing the plot', or as one parent said:

I've got the help now, but it took me years of hell and a lot of destruction before I got it, and now it's too late, my son's 15 and he's in prison.

Activities

Young people of all ages and in all situations perceived the main gap in service provision to be activities which meaningfully occupied young people's time, including opportunities to take part in sport, music, outdoor activities, trips, holidays and youth clubs. These were all felt to be good ways of keeping young people 'off the streets', alleviating boredom and therefore likely to reduce offending or other problems, such as

substance misuse. It was pointed out that activities needed to be age-appropriate and attractive to young people. For example, scouts were not seen as appealing, and some older teenagers perceived youth clubs to be 'childish'.

Parents echoed the need for more activities for young people and for the same reasons. They also identified some additional benefits. It was suggested, for example, that activities could provide opportunities for young people to receive praise, and in some instances, other forms of recognition, such as medals. If youth workers were available for young people to talk to at these services, this would be a bonus. One group of parents suggested that there should be more activities that families could access as a unit.

Currently available opportunities, such as youth groups providing activities around music, film and sport, were seen as highly valuable by parents, although they didn't believe that there were enough such services. Another barrier mentioned by parents was the prohibitive cost of activities; this was particularly problematic for larger families.

Prevention and early intervention

Young people attending preventative programmes such as YISP and JYIP valued the support this provided, and felt it would be beneficial to other young people who had personal problems. Key benefits of such programmes were identified:

- youth workers to talk to, who can help with problems
- keeping them off the streets
- having fun
- making friends.

The general perception was that less help was available for young people before they got into trouble. A focus group of older young people on ISSP identified the need for early intervention for young people to stop them offending in the first place. It was felt that this should start from the age of 10 when they are first allowed on to the streets. They felt it was 'bad' that young people got help only when they were in trouble, whereas the resources could be more effectively deployed at an earlier stage:

YP 1: ...it could cut down on crime, if you had help in the first, earlier in the first place if you had help you wouldn't be doing it.

*YP 2: Yeah it could have cut a lot of sentences out, could have cut a lot of rapes, a lot of murders, loads of **** like that.*

They acknowledged this would not be without difficulty, reflecting that when they were younger they did not actually want to talk to those youth workers who approached groups of young people in the community, reporting that some young people would be rude to these workers to show off.

The need for more early intervention for early offenders was also illustrated by the views expressed in a focus group with early offenders who were not attending a programme such as YISP, JYIP or PAYP. Participants in this group felt more strongly than others that there was no help available for young people.

The need for earlier intervention and preventative support was a key theme emerging from the parent focus groups. Parents expressed their frustration at the difficulty they faced accessing help before problems had escalated and were at crisis stage. They felt

that information was lacking about available services, and that they didn't feel that they were listened to when asking for help.

Through discussion of scenarios, it was clear that these parents did not expect vulnerable young people to get help with their problems until they were more serious. The projected future of young people in the scenarios often seemed bleak, generally involving an escalation of drug use, offending and culminating in prison.

The youth justice system

Young people spoke favourably of the help they had received from the YOT, including their experiences of ISSP and preventative programmes. Young people felt that YOT workers were helpful and displayed many of the desirable characteristics discussed earlier. Once in touch with the YOT, young people felt more help was available and that they had more information about services. However, participants also felt the extent to which young people benefited from YOT orders depended on whether they were willing to take advantage of the help on offer.

Views varied among those who had experienced custody as to whether it helped young people with their needs and offending behaviour. One young person put forward the view that while shorter sentences did not act as a deterrent, a longer sentence would, while another participant suggested the opposite. Another suggested it that custody would not deter young people from further crime, as after they had experienced it once they would no longer fear it. It was felt that prison provided some helpful services for young people, such as Connexions and the gym.

Parents' satisfaction with services provided by the YOT appeared quite high.

Participants often viewed YOT workers as being different from other professionals, being friendlier, more approachable and generally helpful. Parents would like to see more YOT workers so that more time could be spent with young people. Parents in one group felt the YOT was 'let down' by other services they worked with, such as social services.

A parent whose child was in prison hoped that this might mean that they would now receive the help they needed, in particular a mental health assessment, which they had been trying to get for a long time.

Education

Teenagers in particular felt that education provisions failed to meet the needs of young people who had many problems and poor behaviour. They described how young people were sent out of class, excluded or sent to a special unit if they were poorly behaved or truanted. Young people's views of learning support units, or other forms of support such as learning mentors, were generally not favourable. However, despite the negative personal experiences of some group members, teachers were identified during the discussion of different scenarios as being a potential source of help for young people. For example, it was suggested that young people could go to teachers for advice, although it was acknowledged that young people may feel too embarrassed to discuss their personal problems. While the young people felt schools should help, views differed as to whether they actually would help. Younger participants with less or no offending history were more likely to expect schools to help with problems.

Parents identified the same issues as young people with regard to educational provision. It was felt that there was a lack of consistency in the amount of support that schools were prepared to provide for young people with behavioural problems:

*You get some schools that will help you all the way and other schools that just don't really give a ****.*

Some parents described positive experiences, for example a child who had received counselling at school and was currently engaging with a PRU prior to re-joining their mainstream school. This school was felt to have a good 'support system'. Parents valued mentors in schools, people who young people could relate to and talk with. One parent reported that her child had identified a particular teacher at school with whom problems could be discussed. This teacher had a remit of joint working with other services to access help. However, a predominant view expressed by parents was that schools did not deal with young people's problems, as it was perceived that their priority had to be on teaching.

'Our staff are here to teach children, not to run around after you, because you...can't sit down and conduct yourself in class, we haven't got the time, we haven't got the resources.' Can you imagine a child hearing that all the time? Basically telling the child, 'you're a waster, you're a waste of time'.

It was acknowledged that schools were under pressure to focus on learning, and it was suggested that closer joint working with social services could help ensure greater understanding in school about the reasons for a young person's problems, and also help to develop a more appropriate response. Parents' perception is that difficult behaviour in school will typically result in the child being sent out of class, and ultimately expelled. Parents did not approve of such a response on the grounds that young people did not see it as a punishment. Group participants provided numerous examples of young people with problems in their personal lives who were truanting, misbehaving and failing to achieve. Parents described long waits for alternative educational placements for their children.

As discussed in the integrated working section above, parents hoped that information sharing, communication and joint working would improve teachers' understanding of young people's wider needs, although they also feared that teachers were amongst those most likely to blame and label young people on the basis of information about offending.

Finding employment

Employment was important to the older age groups, not only as a means of earning money, but as a way of occupying their time. Both of these factors were perceived to reduce offending. It was felt that having a job could raise young people's confidence and self esteem and indirectly provide other forms of satisfaction through purchasing clothes or a car. However, the young people in the focus groups felt that it would be difficult to gain employment, particularly with a poor education and criminal record.

Connexions was identified by teenage participants as one route by which young people could access employment. While some felt that Connexions was generally helpful, one individual pointed out that the process of finding employment through Connexions could be lengthy.

Parents were also aware of the Connexions service, but felt that it could be more proactive in helping young people to find work, for example by trying harder to motivate young people, offering more personal advice or suggesting suitable jobs.

Services for health, mental health and substance misuse

Young people did not discuss mainstream health services such as GPs or hospitals in any great detail, although they suggested that such services could possibly help vulnerable young people. Ask FRANK and specialist substance misuse services were identified as sources of help with drugs, smoking and alcohol, in addition to mainstream services. One young person felt that drug use could in itself provide a barrier to accessing help as it was likely to lead to missed appointments.

Parents felt that long waiting times hindered the extent to which young people could be helped by health and mental health services, citing anger management, counselling and mental health services in this context. Parents felt frustrated by their experiences of long periods (often years) of waiting for mental health services such as counselling.

Support for parents

The issue of support for parents was not explored in detail with young people, although it was suggested that supporting parents with their needs would also benefit their children.

Parents felt that more support should be available to the parents of young people who offend. Support workers from the YOT or from housing services were highly valued by those who had them. Those parents who had attended YOT parenting programmes had mostly found them helpful, one of the main reasons being that they felt supported and less isolated having met other parents in similar situations. It was suggested that stigma could be a barrier preventing other parents from attending such programmes.

Boundaries and punishment

While most young people in the focus groups viewed providing social activities and tackling other underlying causes as being the primary way to preventing offending, some individuals suggested that deterrents were also necessary. For example, one group of older teenagers with mixed experience of the youth justice system concluded that schools should be stricter and should use corporal punishment. In addition, this group considered that parents and the community more generally needed to be tougher on young people when they misbehaved, so that they did not feel they could 'get away with it'.

Younger people who were accessing preventative programmes felt the police could help by talking to young people who offend about their crime, and by explaining the implications of continuing to offend. Generally, however, the police were seen as punitive rather than helpful to young people who offend.

Parents generally felt that more authority, discipline and boundaries would help reduce the extent to which young people displayed problem behaviour. Parents expressed concern that young people felt they could 'get away' with anything because people in positions of authority – such as police, parents and teachers – were seen as being increasingly powerless. It was felt that young people's awareness of their rights, and the legal restrictions on the use of physical force, were major factors.

'There's no discipline at all, and...children of today have got no respect for anybody, because there's nothing that's going to come down on them and say 'Whack! You aren't going to do that again are you?' There's no punishment whatsoever.'

There were mixed views about the role of police. A small number felt that the police were too 'harsh' towards young people in general, and this hindered relationships between young people and the police. 'Good' police officers spoke to young people with respect. Many parents felt that young people could have been prevented from getting into serious trouble by being reprimanded at an early stage in their offending. For example, one mother spoke about her teenage son:

He's in prison now. But I think the police should have, I know it's a horrible thing to say, they should have come down on him a lot quicker than what they did, and he shouldn't have been allowed to get away with half of it.

Suggestions made by parents included boot camps, corporal punishment in schools and, for one parent, bringing back national service.

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